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OTHER PERSONNEL QUESTIONS

PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1980-1981

Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation
of the classification systems for posts in the
Professional and General Service categories

Revised estimates under section 28C. Office of Personnel Services,
Headquarters and section 28H. Administrative and Financial
Services, Geneva

1. The purpose of this report is to inform the General Assembly of the status of the classification system for the Secretariat posts at the Professional level and above, and the efforts undertaken in respect to the development of classification systems for posts in the General Service category at Headquarters and in Geneva. The report also contains proposals for the administration of the classification systems as an ongoing personnel management function and revised budget estimates arising from these proposals.

I. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM

2. The initial steps for the classification of posts were based upon the mandate granted by the decision of the General Assembly at its 2324th meeting (twenty-ninth session) and its resolution 31/193 B of 22 December 1976. Various stages of the development of the classification system, its gradual implementation and the classification methodology used were reported to the General Assembly in two notes by the Secretary-General (A/C.5/32/57, of 23 November 1977, and A/C.5/33/28, of 24 October 1978).

A. The results of the classification survey

3. During the period since the last report was submitted to the General Assembly, the classification survey at Headquarters, New York, and at the overseas offices of the Secretariat continued. A total of 3,603 posts have been evaluated and classified by grade. The results of the survey are shown in tables 1 and 2.

Table 1

CLASSIFICATION RESULTS

UNITED NATIONS SECRETARIAT BY DEPARTMENTS AND TOTAL - HEADQUARTERS

	STRUCTURAL UNIT												Sub-total NY HQ
	OSG	ODG/DIEC	OSSECS	OLA	PSCA ^{a/}	PATD	IESA	TCD	A+M ^{a/}	DCS ^{a/}	DPI	CTC	
1. No. of posts in staffing table (P-1 through D-1)	47	10	18	51	95	36	319	233	320 ^{c/}	710 ^{d/}	140 ^{e/}	30	2 009
2. No. of post descriptions received and classified	38	10	7	45	83	35	262	88	309	678	139	29	1 723
3. No. of posts that remain to be classified	9 ^{b/}	0	11	6	12	1	57 ^{b/}	145 ^{b/}	11	32	1	1	286
4. Classification results based on post grades authorized in the staffing table													
4.1 Grade level retained (a) No.	32	10	3	39	69	28	225	71	246	591 ^{f/}	110	27	1 451 ^{f/}
(b) %*	84.2	100.0	42.9	86.7	83.1	80.0	85.9	80.7	79.6	87.2	79.1	93.1	84.21
4.2 Upgradings (a) No.	5	0	4	2	3	2	13	11	23	-	9	1	73
(b) %*	13.2	0	57.1	4.4	3.6	5.7	4.9	12.5	7.4	-	6.5	3.45	4.24
4.3 Downgradings (a) No.	1	0	0	4	11	5	24	6	40	-	20	1	112
(b) %*	2.6	0	0	8.9	13.3	14.3	9.2	6.8	13.0	-	14.4	3.45	6.50
4.4 Changes in total (a) No.	6	0	4	6	14	7	37	17	63	-	29	2	185
(b) %*	15.8	0	57.1	13.3	16.9	20.0	14.1	19.3	20.4	-	20.9	6.9	10.74

* Percentages refer to the number of posts that have been evaluated.

a/ Consultations on the final results still in process.

b/ Classification of remaining posts delayed due to restructuring.

c/ Including OFS, OPS, OGS, AMS, EDPIS and Internal Audit.

d/ Including Dag Hammarskjöld Library.

e/ Excluding United Nations information centres.

f/ 87 posts in DCS pending final classification decision.

Table 1 (continued)

CLASSIFICATION RESULTS

UNITED NATIONS SECRETARIAT BY OFFICES - OVERSEAS - AND OVER-ALL TOTAL

	STRUCTURAL UNIT									TOTAL** OVER-ALL
	UNOG ^{a/}	UNEP ^{a/}	ECA ^{a/}	ECLA ^{a/}	ESCAP ^{a/}	UNIDO	UNIC	ECE ^{a/}	UNCTAD ^{a/}	
1. No. of posts in staffing table (P-1 through D-1)	541 ^{g/}	151	205	190	169	419	48	121	227	4 080
2. No. of post descriptions received and classified	498	133	193	168	154	393	13	121	207	3 603
3. No. of posts that remain to be classified	43	18	12	22	15	26	35	0	20	477
4. Classification results based on post grades authorized in the staffing table										
4.1 Grade level retained										
(a) No.	447	101	157	137	144	314	9	107	178	3 045 ^{f/}
(b) %*	89.7	75.9	81.4	81.5	93.5	79.9	69.2	88.4	85.99	84.51
4.2 Upgradings										
(a) No.	26	11	28	16	6	28	3	9	12	212
(b) %*	5.2	8.3	14.5	9.5	3.9	7.1	23.1	7.44	5.80	5.88
4.3 Downgradings										
(a) No.	25	21	8	15	4	51	1	5	17	259
(b) %*	5.0	15.8	4.1	8.9	2.6	13.0	7.7	4.13	8.2	7.19
4.4 Changes in total										
(a) No.	51	32	36	31	10	79	4	14	29	471
(b) %*	10.2	24.1	18.6	18.5	6.5	20.1	30.8	11.6	14.01	13.07

* Percentages refer to the number of posts that have been evaluated.

** ECWA, HABITAT and staff on special mission assignment to be classified in 1980.

g/ Excludes ECE, UNCTAD and UNEP regional office.

Table 2

EFFECTS OF CLASSIFICATION ON STAFFING TABLE

UNITED NATIONS SECRETARIAT, TOTAL

GRADE LEVEL	CHANGES AS COMPARED TO STAFFING TABLE				STAFFING TABLE POSTS BEFORE CLASSIFICATION		STAFFING TABLE POSTS AFTER CLASSIFICATION DECISIONS ARE FULLY IMPLEMENTED	
	UPGRADINGS TO		DOWNGRADINGS TO					
	NO.**	%*	NO.**	%*	NO.**	%*	NO.** <u>c/</u>	%*
D-1	20 <u>a/</u>	0.56	0	0	216	6.00	214 <u>a/</u>	5.94
P-5	44	1.25	22	0.61	574	15.93	536	14.88
P-4	50	1.42	83	2.30	1 005	27.89	1 003	27.84
P-3	98	2.91	85	2.36	1 264	35.08	1 340	37.19
P-2/P-1	0	0	69 <u>b/</u>	1.92	544	15.10	510 <u>b/</u>	14.15
Total	212 <u>a/</u>	5.88	259 <u>b/</u>	7.19	3 603	100.00	3 603 <u>a/</u> <u>b/</u>	100.00

* Percentages refer to the number of posts that have been evaluated.

** The figures in each grade level before and after classification result from changes in grade levels sometimes extending to up and downward moves by more than one grade level; therefore, they cannot be computed by adding and subtracting changes from one grade level above and below.

a/ One D-1 post has been upgraded to the D-2 level.

b/ Two Professional posts have been downgraded to the General Service category.

c/ 87 posts in DCS retain their original level, pending final classification decision.

4. Tables 1 and 2 indicate that the application of the grading standards has confirmed the current staffing table grade level for 84.51 per cent of the posts surveyed. The level of 5.88 per cent of the posts would have to be raised, and the level of 7.19 per cent of the posts would have to be lowered, by one or more levels in order to bring the remaining posts in line with the established grading standards.

5. Table 2 contains the over-all results of classification decisions as reflected in the grade distribution in the Secretariat. Despite a total number of 259 proposed downgradings and 212 proposed upgradings, there is no major change in the number of posts at each grade level Secretariat-wide. However, the picture is markedly different if one compares the results department by department as indicated in table 1. In some departments the number of upgradings exceeds the number of downgradings, and in others the reverse is the case. This might be taken as an indication that, in the absence of a systematic approach to the classification of posts, significant differences have arisen in the grade profiles of different departments and offices in respect of comparable functions. With the implementation of a uniform grading system which objectively compares the duties and responsibilities of each post, classifying them by grade accordingly, the grade profiles can be made consistent.

6. In the process of classifying posts, extensive consultations were held with the chiefs of sections, directors of divisions and/or executive head of offices, as well as with interested staff representatives and individual staff members, to explain both the objectives of classification and the grades proposed as a result of the application of the classification process. These consultations are still under way in most of the departments and offices concerned as indicated in the foot-notes of table 1.

7. The results of the reclassification of posts with special language requirements are the subject of continuing review by groups composed, for each of the several language occupational groups (interpreters, translators, verbatim reporters, copy preparers and editors) within the Department of Conference Services, of representatives of the Department, of the staff and of the Classification Section. The review has focused attention on the question of career prospects. So far as translators are concerned, this question was the subject of recommendations by the former President of the International Court of Justice, Dr. Jiménez de Aréchaga, whom the Secretary-General requested to undertake an inquiry into this and other questions affecting language staff. His first recommendation was that the criteria followed in the classification of language staff posts should be reviewed with full staff participation and modified as necessary. The second was that among the objectives of the review should be:

(a) The recommendation of the interagency meeting on language arrangements, convened by the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination (ACC), that a more favourable proportion should be established between the P-5, P-4 and P-3 posts in order to provide avenues of advancement and to retain the best staff; and

(b) The further recommendations of the meeting that the ratios between P-5, P-4 and P-3 language posts should be such that "career development for language staff would be no less favourable than for other Professional staff".

8. The second recommendation requires time for study because of the change it would imply in present classification practice with respect to the evaluation of language posts, and the relation of career prospects for language staff to that of other Professional staff in the Secretariat. In view of the difficulties associated with this change, the Secretary-General has decided to establish a special group to examine all aspects of this question and to submit specific proposals. It would be his intention to report on these proposals and their financial implications to the General Assembly at its thirty-fifth session and to seek its approval of any required budgetary adjustments.

9. By the end of 1979, the classification survey will have covered all the departments and offices of the United Nations Secretariat, including those at duty stations away from Headquarters, except the Economic Commission for Western Asia (ECWA), the newly established United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (HABITAT) and most United Nations information centres (UNIC). Approximately 191 posts in these offices will be surveyed during the first half of 1980. Owing to certain delays in the final implementation of the new structure in the economic and social fields of the Secretariat, particularly in the Department of Technical Co-operation for Development (TCD) and the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs (IESA), approximately 207 posts in these two sectors remain to be classified before 31 December 1979. Apart from those larger groups of posts that were delayed by general reorganizations, a small proportion of posts in various departments and offices have not yet been classified because, for a variety of reasons, post descriptions have not yet been submitted. The post descriptions missing to date will be included in the general survey as soon as they can be made available.

B. Consequences of the classification survey

10. From a strictly technical point of view, it would be desirable to have the results of the classification survey implemented immediately and to the fullest extent and, as a consequence, to have all staffing tables reflect the classified grade of all posts. However, such action would require the General Assembly to authorize the Secretary-General to upgrade posts without prior approval of the budget, an authority which the Secretary-General does not seek. Therefore, in implementing the proposed changes in individual post levels, the Secretary-General will take into account that modifications of the staffing tables, as a result of the classification system, must be introduced in accordance with the established procedures. He must also take into account that every post already carries a grade level and that most are occupied by a staff member whose contractual status must in all cases be safeguarded. For these reasons, the results listed in tables 1 and 2 should be considered as an indicator of the general grading trend and of the degree to which the grades of the existing posts are in line with the classification standards. In order to guarantee that the conversion from a situation without systematic job evaluation to one with an orderly administered classification plan be executed as smoothly as possible, a transitional period, starting on 1 January 1980,

would be required. In the course of the transitional period, the adjustment of the budget documents, the staffing tables in particular, to the classified levels of posts would gradually be undertaken.

11. In determining the details of the administrative procedure for the implementation of the classification system with respect to the incumbents of posts, the Secretary-General intends to follow the principles outlined below:

(a) The classification survey and the implementation of the resulting grade levels of posts will not affect the statutory and contractual rights of any staff member.

(b) Since the classification system is designed to consider the assignments of a given post rather than personal qualities of a staff member, the existing procedures for evaluating the performance of staff members and for their promotion to higher grade levels in accordance with their personal qualifications and the requirements of the Organization will continue to be applied. However, the grade level of a post, once it is classified, will not be changed unless the work assignments change. Thus, the promotion of a staff member will, in future, normally require his or her transfer to another post classified at a higher level. It will only be possible to promote a staff member without moving to another post if he or she is initially assigned to the post while in a grade lower than that of the post.

(c) Upgrading of a post will require the approval of the General Assembly, except as provided in paragraph 12 (c) below. A staff member occupying a post which has been upgraded will have to undergo the regular promotion procedure in order to become eligible for the higher grade level.

(d) In those cases in which a post is recommended for downgrading, the incumbent staff member will retain his or her personal grade level as long as he or she occupies the post and continues to receive periodical increments in remuneration. A staff member can also be considered for promotion under the established promotion procedure, provided that he or she can be reassigned to a post at the appropriate higher level.

(e) Classification decisions which are challenged by individual staff members will be subject to a recourse procedure. A joint committee on job classification will be established in order to deal with staff grievances concerning classification decisions which, in the view of the staff member concerned, are inconsistent with the established classification standards.

12. The implications of classification in respect of existing staffing tables, as discussed in the interim note to the General Assembly at its thirty-third session (A/C.5/33/28), will be the following:

(a) Posts for which the grade level has been confirmed by the classification survey will be considered officially classified at that level.

(b) When a post is recommended for downgrading, the staffing table will nevertheless continue to show the current grade level until the post becomes vacant or a change of incumbency takes place, at which time the department will be notified by the Assistant Secretary-General for Financial Services that the staffing table will be adjusted accordingly. Such changes will be reported to the General Assembly in the context of budget estimates and performance reports.

(c) The upgrading of established posts will continue to be subject to the approval of the General Assembly in accordance with the normal budgetary procedures. This means that any requests for upgradings that would result in a net increase of posts at the higher level in a budget section will be included in the regular or revised budget submissions to the General Assembly. However, in order to provide a degree of flexibility in administering the system, it is proposed that the Secretary-General be authorized to adjust the staffing tables within each budget section, provided that the number of posts upgraded to each grade level is offset by an equivalent number of downgradings from that grade level to lower grades, thereby leaving the authorized number of posts at each level concerned unchanged.

(d) The underlying principle of classification requires that a post is established and classified in accordance with the duties and responsibilities to be carried out and should not be determined and influenced by personal aspects related to the incumbents.

C. Classification of the General Service posts at Headquarters and in the United Nations Office at Geneva

13. In addition to the classification of posts in the Professional category and above, the General Assembly has requested the Secretary-General to proceed with the classification of General Service posts at Headquarters and Geneva.

14. Preliminary work for the classification survey of General Service posts in New York was carried out in the first half year of 1979. However, due to the need to concentrate all staff resources on the classification of the Professional category, the actual design of the classification system for the General Service in New York is now in process and will be completed early 1980. This work includes a study of feasibility of replacing the present five grade level system by a six or seven grade level system, the selection and testing of General Service benchmark jobs and the design and the testing of the necessary classification procedures. At the same time, comprehensive consultations are being conducted with staff representatives on the implementation of the new system. Judging from previous experience with other classification projects at the United Nations, particularly in the United Nations Office at Geneva, considerable time will have to be devoted to the consultation process with the staff in order to obtain the full co operation of the staff in developing and establishing the classification system.

15. It is expected that the actual implementation of the classification system for General Service in New York will start in 1980. This will require the preparation and review of descriptions for approximately 2,500 jobs, their analysis and classification, and the review of the classification results with the

departments and the conduct of staff/management consultations on the classification results. Under favourable conditions, with the proposed level of resources, it is expected that the General Service classification can be completed in approximately two years.

16. As mentioned in chapter II, section D, of the report of the Secretary-General on the composition of the Secretariat (A/34/408), progress was achieved in the development of the classification system for General Service posts in the United Nations Office at Geneva. The Director-General of the Geneva Office, working in close co-operation with staff representatives, has approved the classification system for General Service posts as proposed by a joint working group of administration and staff representatives. This has created favourable conditions for the implementation of the system and its eventual ongoing administration. The initial classification of all General Service posts in Geneva is expected to be completed within the 1980-1981 biennium if the required resources for its completion are made available.

D. Benefits of classification and the need for continuation

17. The objectives of the classification system were reported to the General Assembly as being to ensure that the classification of posts shall be determined by a consistent relationship between duties and the grade level attached to them, by the principle that staff members performing the same duties and responsibilities will be graded in the same way and, further, that the levels and titles of posts will have a clearly defined meaning for budgetary and personnel purposes (A/C.5/1601 of 6 September 1974, para. 10). The General Assembly, having considered the report of the Secretary-General, authorized him to proceed with the implementation of his proposal in that regard (decision of the General Assembly at its 2324th meeting on 18 December 1974).

18. Immediate practical benefits of post classification are that the budgetary bodies of the United Nations, the Administration, and the staff representatives can now base their work upon workable classification standards for the wide variety of posts at the Professional level and above in the United Nations Secretariat. The existence and further improvement of post descriptions in a uniform format assists the issuance of vacancy announcements, the work of the Appointment and Promotion Committee and Appointment and Promotion Board, and personnel administration in general. It also helps supervisors to streamline the organization and distribute work within their organizational entities.

19. Although the classification of posts during the reporting period has been considered to be in a preparatory and testing phase, it has been used during the preparation of the budget submission. All departmental requests for new posts and for the reclassification of existing posts submitted to the Office of Financial Services in preparation for the proposed 1980-1981 budget were subject to a prior classification review in order to ensure that budget submissions for new posts or reclassifications met the established classification criteria. 1/

1/ Many of the changes shown in table 1 have already been reflected in the proposed programme budget for 1980-1981.

In addition, all posts at Headquarters that were open for recruitment from outside the Secretariat were classified before the vacancy was publicly announced. These two measures constituted an important step towards the implementation of classification as a systematic approach that also contributed to retaining the general grade profile of the staff of the Secretariat within the limits set by the nature of the work assignments.

20. In order to be effective, the classification concept must be established as an ongoing activity, like other administrative and management functions. If there should be no follow-up, and no monitoring and maintenance of the classification system (see para. 21), the classification results would soon be outdated, perhaps even distorted, and eventually the system, as such, would prove purposeless. A classification system in a complex organization can only be administered on a centralized basis.

21. An effective and up-to-date classification system requires a variety of monitoring and maintenance activities:

- (a) Over-all monitoring and administration of the system, which includes:
 - (i) The review of grades whenever changes in the job content have taken place, for instance, because of modifications of work programmes, reorganization measures etc.;
 - (ii) Classification analysis of newly requested posts and review of requests for reclassification;
 - (iii) Review and updating of the classification tools, such as classification standards, benchmark jobs and forms and procedures;
 - (iv) Maintenance of an essential reference system of classification decisions, benchmark jobs, job descriptions and other material.
- (b) Conduct of job audits for individual posts or groups of posts in order to ensure up-to-date classification results. This will include:
 - (i) Desk audits through interview with staff members;
 - (ii) Review and redrafting of job descriptions;
 - (iii) Classification analysis based on the revised job descriptions.
- (c) Tasks related to appeals and grievances against classification decisions. This includes:
 - (i) Study of the cases and review of the original classification analysis;
 - (ii) Preparation of an opinion on the validity of the appeals or grievances for the classification review body;

(iii) Servicing of the meetings of the classification review body.

(d) Co-operation with the United Nations Training Service, the staff of the Secretariat, particularly managers, personnel officers and staff representatives, on the concept, implications and techniques of classification.

(e) Support and advisory services to offices away from Headquarters in the development and operation of classification systems for their personnel, such as Field Service, General Service and related positions.

(f) Participation in the activities undertaken by the International Civil Service Commission and the Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions with respect to post classification and occupational grouping.

22. The proper discharge of the classification activities outlined in the preceding sections of the report requires continuation of staff resources on the same basis and at the same level as approved by the General Assembly for the initial development and implementation of the classification system. In the light of experience gained in the implementation period in 1980-1981, the Secretary-General may, in the context of the 1982-1983 programme budget, make further proposals regarding the administration and staffing of the classification system.

E. Recommendation

23. The Secretary-General therefore recommends that he be given the authority to proceed with the implementation of a classification system for the Professional category as from 1 January 1980 in the manner outlined in the present report.

II. REVISED BUDGET ESTIMATES

24. In his proposed programme budget for the biennium 1980-1981, the Secretary-General proposed in paragraph 28C.22 that the Classification Section be maintained at the same resource level as obtained during the current biennium, namely, one P-5, two P-4, one P-3 and one P-2 temporary posts. The Advisory Committee in paragraph 28.21 of its report (A/34/7) recommended that the estimates for 1980-1981 be reduced by the equivalent of the salary and common staff costs of the five Professional posts in the Classification Section and stated further that the level and type of temporary staff resources for the classification exercise in 1980-1981 be considered in the context of the report to be submitted by the Secretary-General.

25. In paragraph 20 above, the Secretary-General proposes to establish the classification of posts as an ongoing personnel management function. The proper completion of the classification tasks described in this report requires the continuation for 1980-1981 of the Classification Section established within the Division for Policy Co-ordination, Office of Personnel Services, and the maintenance of the post of a classification specialist in the Division for Administration and Finance, United Nations Office at Geneva. In view of the

intention to adhere to the strictest budgetary restraint, the Secretary-General proposes to continue the work with the same level of staff resources as were allocated to the Classification Section in 1979.

26. Of the five Professional posts in the Classification Section at Headquarters in 1978-1979, three posts (one P-4, one P-3, one P-2) were fully occupied with the Professional posts classification project, while the Chief of the Section and the remaining Professional and support staff devoted approximately equal parts of their time to both the Professional and the General Service classification projects.

27. During the biennium 1980-1981, it is planned to distribute the classification assignments among the staff of the Classification Section at Headquarters as follows:

(a) Responsibility for all classification projects:

1 P-5, Chief of Section

(b) Administration of the classification system for the Professional and above posts, Secretariat-wide:

1 P-4 Classification Officer, responsible for the project

1 P-3 Classification Officer

1 P-2 Associate Classification Officer, for 50 per cent of the time assisting in the project, the other 50 per cent to be devoted to the General Service project

(c) General Service classification at Headquarters, New York:

1 P-4 Classification Officer, responsible for the development of the system, assisted part-time by the above-mentioned P-2 staff member

(d) Support staff:

2 General Service posts (established posts)

28. It should be noted that the Advisory Committee, in recommending the deletion of the five Professional temporary posts from the budget estimates for 1980-1981 pending the full report of the Secretary-General on the classification exercise, did not make reference to the General Service established posts cited above. As those two posts are thus far maintained for 1980-1981, no additional resources are sought for secretarial/clerical support for the section.

29. The staff resources currently available for the classification of the General Service posts in the United Nations Office at Geneva (one P-4 temporary post) need to be continued for the forthcoming budget period. After completion of the

development of the classification system for General Service posts, the most time-consuming tasks still lie ahead, namely, the actual completion of post evaluation for the classification of posts by grade and the continuing consultation between administration and staff, as well as, eventually, the ongoing operation of the system.

30. The Secretary-General estimates the total cost of the staff resources requested in connexion with the continuation of the classification exercise to be \$312,500 for salaries and \$100,000 for common staff costs under section 28C, and \$97,900 for salaries and \$25,400 for common staff costs under section 28H. In addition, a provision of resources in the amount of \$113,400 for staff assessment under section 31 will be required, offset by increased estimates of income in similar amount under income section 1.