



SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 35th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. PIRSON (Belgium)

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

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 104: PERSONNEL QUESTIONS (continued)

(a) COMPOSITION OF THE SECRETARIAT: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued)
(A/34/408; A/C.5/34/CRP.2, 3, 4 and 5)

1. Mr. SPETSIOS (Greece) expressed his delegation's concern at the imbalance in the geographical representation of Member States in the ranks of the Secretariat. It was unfortunate that, during the financial year ending on 30 June 1979, only 60 nationals of under-represented countries should have been appointed to posts subject to geographical distribution, while in the same period, 93 nationals of over-represented Member States were appointed. Greece, which was among the under-represented countries, was anxious to see the situation corrected. In that connexion, more use should be made of the roster of candidates and there should be closer co-operation with the permanent missions to evaluate the chances for recruitment of their national candidates.
2. Regarding the proportion of women in the Secretariat, there should be a redoubled effort to attain the targets set in General Assembly resolution 33/143, section III.
3. In the matter of the allocation of posts subject to geographical distribution, on which a number of comments had been made, it was of course difficult to balance correctly the factors of contribution, membership and population. However, while the important role of the large contributors could not be overlooked, nor could the increasing role of the developing world. Care should be taken, moreover, to avoid any conflict with the legitimate aspirations of under-represented Member States or smaller countries at an intermediate level of development which had been assigned low desirable ranges.
4. Regarding the competitive examination for selecting General Service staff for promotion to the Professional category, the Secretary-General had taken steps to put into effect the relevant provision of resolution 33/143. Supplementary measures should also be envisaged in order to guarantee a smooth transition.
5. Mr. HOMADI-NEJAD (Iran) noted with satisfaction that the Secretariat had taken positive steps to implement General Assembly resolution 33/143. In particular, steps had been taken to organize competitive examinations to enable General Service staff to advance to the Professional category. However, despite the efforts that had been made, no significant progress had been achieved in respect of equitable geographical distribution of the Secretariat staff, improved age distribution and representation of developing countries, particularly at the higher level.
6. Generally speaking, the Secretariat should make an effort to implement the decisions of the General Assembly more speedily and efficiently. In that connexion, it was disquieting that certain posts continued to be occupied by certain Member States, which seemed to have established their own rules, thereby depriving the

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(Mr. Homadi-Nejad, Iran)

Secretariat of any meaningful control over the situation. The matter required urgent attention. Turning to the question of recruitment, he said that the appointment of young people to Professional posts should be encouraged.

7. Miss ZONICLE (Bahamas) said that, although document A/34/408 was merely a progress report on the implementation of resolution 33/143, a number of delegations had raised matters of substance, in particular regarding the way in which the principle of equitable representation was currently applied. The Organization was at a crossroads in that respect, and the consequences of the choice to be made must be carefully weighed.

8. Taking the individual case of the Bahamas, she noted that it was one of the unrepresented States mentioned in the Secretary-General's report. However, as shown on page 8 of document A/C.5/34/CRP.2 of 20 October 1979, that situation was on the point of changing. The delegation of the Bahamas wished to pay a tribute to the Secretary-General and his assistants for the efforts they had made in that connexion, while at the same time expressing the hope that the representation of the Bahamas would not stop at the threshold of the desirable range assigned to it.

9. That being the case, it would be premature to analyse in detail the results of the implementation of resolution 33/143 from the point of view of balanced geographical distribution. Such an analysis could not take place until 1980. Nevertheless, from an over-all point of view, it was encouraging to note that the situation had improved in all the regions, with the exception of Eastern Europe, both for Professional posts as a whole and for posts at the higher level.

10. As far as distribution by age was concerned, and in particular the lowering of the average age of staff in P-1 and P-2 posts, there had unfortunately been very little improvement. In addition, of the 1,484 Professionals at the levels P-4 to D-1, only 161 were under 40 years of age. It would be impossible to solve that problem in isolation from considerations of career development, retirement, exceptions to the regulations on the retirement age, and the nature of contracts of employment.

11. In connexion with the analysis of the current situation in respect of permanent and fixed-term appointments in table 10 of document A/34/408, the delegation of the Bahamas believed that it would be possible to remedy the "brain drain" that might result from a high level of fixed-term contracts if Member States would undertake to authorize a percentage of their nationals, after imparting to their national systems the first-hand knowledge and experience gained in the United Nations system, to return to the system on a permanent basis. In that way, it would be possible not only to promote an expert independent Secretariat but also one sensitive to the national issues which were at the source of global problems. The delegation of the Bahamas therefore welcomed the measures to lay the foundation for career development through the definition of occupational groups

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(Miss Zonicle, Bahamas)

referred to in the Secretary-General's report (paras. 20 and 21), as well as the introduction of the mobility factor in the annual review leading to the 1979 promotion registers, in response to paragraph 1 (d) of section I of General Assembly resolution 33/143 (para. 23).

12. With respect to the controversy that had arisen over the competitive examinations to be held towards the end of November, the delegation of the Bahamas joined those requesting more information from the Administration on the circumstances surrounding the holding of the examinations and the steps that it intended to take to ensure their fairness and objectivity. The quality of the procedures established for the initial examinations would go a long way towards ensuring the durability of the personnel structure that was being built up. According to paragraph 3 of Article 101 of the Charter, that structure should be the best in the world.

13. Many Member States had expressed dissatisfaction over the quantitatively and qualitatively unbalanced representation that had resulted from the institutionalization of the "desirable range" concept. Developing Member States had been particularly adversely affected. Table A and tables 14, 15, 17 and 18 of the annex to document A/34/408 showed that the imbalance was greater even than it appeared because the majority of posts in the United Nations system were not subject to geographical distribution. It was little wonder, therefore, that there had been calls for the re-examination and possible revision of the criteria (contribution, membership and population) that formed the basis on which the "desirable ranges" were calculated. The delegation of the Bahamas believed that the concept would never result in balanced representation until the "desirable ranges" ceased to be established on the basis of arbitrary criteria and were founded on the principles and provisions of the Charter. In that connexion, Article 100, paragraph 2, and Article 101, paragraph 3, of the Charter laid down the two essential factors: the international character of the Organization's staff and the superior competence and integrity that they should possess.

14. The delegation of the Bahamas felt, accordingly, that the fundamental criterion that should guide the recruitment of the Secretariat staff should be neither the level of contribution, nor the size of population, nor the status of being a Member of the Organization, nor even a mixture of those factors, but the obligation to ensure the genuinely international character of the staff and their superior competence, efficiency and integrity. Moreover, because of the obligation to recruit staff "on as wide a geographical basis as possible", the near-universality of the Organization rendered that obligation almost synonymous with the status of membership. In point of fact, although the result must necessarily be the representation of all Member States on the staff, paragraph 3 of Article 101 of the Charter, read in conjunction with Articles 6 and 103, did not exclude States that were not currently Members of the Organization. The obvious conflict that arose over the near global representation of States in a Secretariat with a limited number of posts was foreshadowed in the warning against uncontrolled growth found in the first sentence of Article 97 of the Charter, which read "The Secretariat shall comprise a Secretary-General and such staff as the Organization may require". That conflict could only be resolved through compliance with the purposes and principles set forth in paragraphs 1 to 4 of Article 1 and paragraphs 1 to 4 of Article 2 of the Charter.

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15. Mr. BAMBA (Upper Volta) observed that although the Secretariat in principle formed a homogeneous non-political body in keeping with the goals it was designed to serve, in practice it was varied in origin and hybrid in the duties assigned to it and in the multifaceted role it was called on to play. The situation was simply a reflection of the state of international relations in the present-day world, of which the Organization was the embodiment. That was why consideration of the matter was so complex, which did not help the search for solutions to the problems raised. That being so, it was up to the Secretariat to reconcile the political desiderata of some Members with the technical requirements of effective staff management.

16. His delegation considered the report of the Secretary-General (A/34/408) as an interim document inasmuch as it described the progress made in implementing General Assembly resolution 33/143, which had been in effect only 10 months. The action taken so far to apply the recommendations set forth in the resolution was encouraging. There was, however, a case for curbing certain trends forthwith; in the light of the new policy thus defined, guidelines could be issued to make the necessary adjustments. The measures taken by the Secretariat to increase the proportion of women in the Secretariat and to reduce the average age of staff in the Professional category were being followed with interest by his delegation; as it was still too early to assess their impact, he hoped that the current trends would accelerate. The same was true for the methods of recruitment used at present to improve the working of the system and the steps taken to eliminate discrimination against women.

17. The problem of geographical distribution had both a numerical and a qualitative aspect. Regarding the former, he said that, in order to change the "desirable range" concept, a study should be undertaken of the weighting of the three criteria governing the determination of "desirable ranges", namely, contribution, population and membership, with a view to ensuring greater equity among Member States in terms of their representation in the Secretariat. Although the contribution factor must remain paramount, it was nevertheless not the level of the contribution of each Member State that should be taken into account but its impact on the economy of the State concerned. Moreover, equity could not be ensured unless the over-representation of certain States or groups of States was reduced in favour of States that were under-represented or unrepresented. For its part, his delegation hoped that the Secretariat would tackle the problem so as to reverse the present trend before it became more serious. With regard to quality, his delegation attached a great deal of importance to the principle that senior posts should not be the preserve of any group of States or, a fortiori, of any individual.

18. As to the competitive examination that was to be held for the promotion of staff from the General Service staff to the Professional category, the delegation of the Upper Volta supported the idea in principle, as it had done by voting for resolution 33/143. With regard to the arrangements to be made, it remained

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(Mr. Bamba, Upper Volta)

convinced that the Administration would be able, by consulting with staff representatives, to find a way of carrying out its mandate to the satisfaction of all. The proposal to be submitted by the Secretary-General relating to participation by staff representatives in discussions of the Fifth Committee would be considered by his delegation when the time came.

19. Mr. EVRIVIADES (Cyprus) said that many of the concerns and expectations of his country pertaining to personnel questions had been effectively stated by other delegations from developing countries, and he was secure in the knowledge that the Secretariat had duly noted the concerns of such countries, particularly over the implementation of General Assembly resolution 33/143. In that respect, his delegation wished to express its deep appreciation to the Secretary-General for his report (A/34/403), which described the measures taken to implement the resolution. It was particularly happy over efforts made to increase the representation of women in the Secretariat, the ongoing attempts to recruit young professionals and the instituting of examinations to promote General Service staff to the Professional category.

20. Concerning the process of recruitment, his delegation firmly believed that the ultimate goal should be the building of a civil service which, as required by Article 101 of the Charter, would have the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity. As many delegations of developing countries had observed, such criteria were compatible with the equitable representation of all Member States in the Secretariat as a whole, including in senior posts. With regard to the implementation of section II of resolution 33/143, which requested the Secretary-General to take steps to increase the representation of developing countries at senior and policy-making levels, his delegation considered that the recommendation should be implemented so as to take into account all developing countries, irrespective of their geographical location. Consequently, paragraph 9 of document A/34/408 should be interpreted correctly so that that requirement was taken into account in the implementation of the above-mentioned resolution.

21. Mr. BELYAEV (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) recalled that ever since the inception of the United Nations, the Byelorussian SSR had consistently requested scrupulous respect of the two basic principles set out in paragraph 3 of Article 101 of the Charter: the necessity of security the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity and the importance of recruiting the staff on as wide a geographical basis as possible. The two principles were closely bound up with one another and, when an examination was made of specific ways of applying them, it was important not to stress one at the expense of the other, even though some countries tried to do so. As to the application of the first principle, his delegation supported any initiative to study in depth ways and means of increasing the competence of Secretariat officials. It also intended to insist firmly on the strict application of the second principle, the equitable geographical distribution

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(Mr. Belyaev, Byelorussian SSR)

of Secretariat posts. The Secretariat could not be truly effective unless, in keeping with the provisions of the Charter, staff were recruited on as wide a geographical basis as possible, account being taken of the desirable range established for each Member State, and unless representation of countries with different socio-political systems was secured at every level, without any discrimination and without any group of countries obtaining particular privileges. His delegation noted that some progress had been made in that direction during the past year. In accordance with the recommendations of the General Assembly, some steps had been taken by the Secretariat to try to apply the principle of equitable geographical distribution, and they had gone some way towards remedying the abnormal situation with respect to recruitment and the distribution of Secretariat posts among Member States. Among the measures taken, the Office of Personnel Services had arranged recruitment missions and had drawn up recruitment plans for nationals of under-represented countries. Unfortunately, the efforts made so far had yielded few positive results; indeed, there were some indications suggesting the reverse. Thus it was that more than half the States of Eastern Europe were still under-represented or at the lower limit of their desirable range. Never, since the Organization had been established, had that region reached the lower limit of its desirable range, and during the past year it had lost another 13 posts. During the same period other regions, in particular those that had long since exceeded the upper limit of their desirable range, had obtained 97 additional posts.

22. According to information contained in the report of the Secretary-General (A/34/408), the number of posts subject to geographical distribution had increased from 2,714 to 2,797 in the period 30 June 1978-30 June 1979. At the end of the year under consideration, 19 Member States were still not represented and there were 22 under-represented States, while some 20 States, including the Byelorussian SSR, were at the lower limit of their desirable range. Thus, some 60 Member States were still not represented to the extent they should be in the Secretariat, a situation which had lasted for several years already. But a very simple calculation showed that to secure representation of such States at a level corresponding to the midpoint of their desirable range, they would require only 244 posts, or 8.5 per cent of the total number of posts subject to geographical distribution. In the course of the past two years, however, 192 posts subject to geographical distribution had gone to over-represented countries, in spite of numerous decisions on the part of the General Assembly. At the same time, if the provisions of the Charter were strictly applied, a problem which had existed for more than 30 years, could be solved within three years without harming any State. The moment had come to stop recruiting nationals of over-represented countries and to do everything possible to solve the problem of the under-representation of 60 States Members of the Organization.

23. One of the most serious obstacles to the application of the principle of equitable geographic distribution was the system of permanent contracts which, moreover, damaged Secretariat efficiency by preventing it from employing the most competent persons, as provided in the Charter. The practice was especially unacceptable in the case of nationals of over-represented countries: not only did it prevent nationals of unrepresented and under-represented countries from entering

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the Secretariat, but it also made certain posts the exclusive preserve of Member States, which was contrary to the provisions of resolution 33/143. His delegation therefore felt that, with a view to ensuring the competence of Secretariat staff, the system of permanent contracts should be abolished, especially in the case of nationals of over-represented countries.

24. With regard to the age of retirement, in some special cases the contracts of some staff members might be extended, but the practice must be an extraordinary measure.

25. The promotion of staff from the General Service category to the Professional category violated the principle of equitable geographic distribution, for it allowed nationals of over-represented countries, often lacking the necessary competence, to hold Professional posts. The Administration should definitely make efforts to recruit more women, who should have the same opportunities to enter the Secretariat as men. Nevertheless, women should be recruited within the limits of the desirable ranges established for each Member State.

26. The reclassification of posts within the Secretariat did not always seem justified, since the responsibilities or workload of the posts had not necessarily increased. Reclassification was often tantamount to a promotion system and thus entailed unjustifiable expenditure.

27. In general, many of the current problems arose from the fact that the principles elaborated in the Charter had been forgotten. The provisions of the Charter and of the relevant General Assembly resolutions should therefore be respected, and the Administration should demonstrate the necessary will and take appropriate action.

28. Mr. AKSOY (Turkey) said that General Assembly resolution 33/143, which had been drafted at the cost of considerable effort, had the main objective of improving the Secretariat's composition and operations. Although the statement made by the Assistant Secretary-General for Personnel Services augured well for the implementation of the resolution, it was still too early to assess accurately the results achieved so far, because certain provisions of the resolution could be effectively implemented only over several years. It would undoubtedly be wiser to postpone consideration of the measures taken to implement the resolution until the next session of the General Assembly.

29. The general guidelines for personnel policy were set out in Article 101 of the Charter: to recruit staff meeting the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity on as wide a geographical basis as possible. The Administration should follow those guidelines as closely as possible. In particular, efforts should be made to avoid creating an international bureaucracy composed mainly of permanent staff and therefore lacking mobility and dynamism. It was especially important to increase the movement of staff between the United Nations and the national administrations, so as to prevent international civil servants from losing contact with their countries of origin. The national administrations, for their part, could benefit from the experience which the staff had gained while working for the United Nations.

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30. With regard to the representation of developing countries - especially at senior levels in the Secretariat - the increased number of nationals from those countries was encouraging but not adequate. The method of establishing the desirable ranges should be rethought. The contributions of Member States were significant in that regard, but the importance of the population factor should not be underestimated. Some developing countries had a great many qualified nationals whose services could be more extensively used by the United Nations without loss to those countries.

31. Efforts should also be made to increase the number of women in the Secretariat, which was far from satisfactory. The Secretariat should, however, be free to choose the most qualified persons, irrespective of their sex, especially in the case of nationals of unrepresented or under-represented countries.

32. With regard to the appearance of vacancy bulletins, delays had often occurred and the bulletins had even been published after the expiry of the time-limit for applications. It was essential that that situation be rectified.

33. Last year, the Committee had been apprised of demands from the staff, which had been submitted either too late or through inappropriate channels. His delegation felt that staff representatives should be able to make their views known. It would examine with interest any recommendations that the Secretary-General might make on that question as a result of contacts between the staff and the Administration. In that connexion, members of the Fifth Committee had recently received a request from the President of the Staff Committee (document A/C.5/34/CRP.5) regarding the access of staff representatives to the Fifth Committee. After briefly examining the document, his delegation feared that there was some confusion between the terms "access" and "negotiations" and "Fifth Committee" and "Administration".

34. With regard to the competitive examination for the promotion of members of the General Service category to the Professional category, a number of questions arose. Leaving aside the principle of the examination itself, which was the best guarantee of impartiality in the matter of promotions, he wondered if general compulsory tests were the best method, for many posts required specialists who were not necessarily capable of passing such tests. There was also a problem regarding General Service staff who already held Professional posts earmarked to be filled by the competitive examination. In addition, candidates whose mother tongue was neither English nor French should not be handicapped. In any case, General Service staff should not have to suffer from the perhaps somewhat hasty organization of the competitive examination. In that connexion, the idea of postponing the examination should not be rejected outright; a postponement would make it possible to improve the organization of the examination and allay staff fears.

35. Mr. JUSTO (Argentina) said that resolution 33/143 was too complicated to allow its application to be evaluated less than a year after it had been adopted. The basic principles of relevance to the subject were those elaborated in Article 101, paragraph 3, of the Charter regarding the recruitment of qualified

(Mr. Justo, Argentina)

staff on the basis of equitable geographical distribution. Those provisions, whose importance had been clearly elucidated by the Soviet delegation, were a norm accepted by all Member States and any attempt, deliberate or other, to tamper with their application should be vigorously denounced. Application of those principles was certainly an arduous, but not impossible task.

36. His delegation attached great importance to the just and rational application of the principle of recruitment "on as wide a geographical basis as possible". The first thing to be done in that respect was to increase the number of posts subject to geographical distribution. Document A/34/408 stated in paragraph 10 that heads of departments and offices had been instructed to follow the guideline that, when a staff member who was a national of an under-represented or marginally represented Member State separated from the service, another national of the same State could be appointed to a post in the same area of the Secretariat, but not necessarily in the same post or at the same level. His delegation felt that that guideline was entirely in accord with resolution 33/143, and hoped that the Secretariat would adhere to it.

37. With regard to the competitive examinations organized by the Secretariat, his delegation felt that that was the most objective method that an administration could use to promote or recruit its staff. Therefore, in spite of the sometimes justified criticism that had been expressed on the subject, the United Nations should not reject such a fundamental principle.

38. Mr. ZINIEL (Ghana) welcomed the Secretary-General's report (A/34/408) and the measures taken in pursuance of General Assembly resolution 33/143. The resolution had been adopted less than a year previously and it was still much too early to assess its results. The Assistant Secretary-General for Personnel Services would certainly endeavour to adhere to the spirit in which it had been adopted. The interpretations to which the text gave rise must not diverge from what had been understood at the time of its adoption.

39. His delegation endorsed the comments made in paragraphs 7, 8 and 10 of the report on the composition of the Secretariat and the arrangements for competitive examination for the promotion of General Service staff to the Professional category. It was for the Secretary-General to exercise his professional judgement in order to achieve the goal set in resolution 33/143.

40. In connexion with the question of the geographical distribution of posts in the Secretariat, it seemed obvious from the contributions of many delegations, and particularly that of Trinidad and Tobago, that a new policy must be evolved. The ideas exchanged in the course of the debate would certainly lead to fruitful consultations. Tables 9 and 16 of the Secretary-General's report gave a clear indication of the problem. For his country, the question of geographical representation was fundamental and part of the broader issue of the restructuring of the services of the United Nations requested by the General Assembly. The representation of Member States must observe the twofold principle of justice and equity. It was therefore entirely opportune that the Secretary-General was endeavouring to reduce the number of unrepresented and under-represented Member States and to improve still further the position of those which fell within their desirable ranges.

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41. The parameters used for calculating the ranges were, however, open to criticism. For example, Ghana was considered as an over-represented Member State, although its contribution had just increased and although it had fewer posts in the Secretariat than certain other Member States which were considered under-represented. While it was correct to take the disparity in contributions into account, the need to bridge the gap between the rich and poor countries should also not be forgotten. It was to be hoped that some progress would be achieved in that regard, in strict conformity with the provisions of Article 101 of the Charter.

42. Women had an important part to play in development. His country's policy was to involve all its citizens in its efforts towards progress. That was why, at the thirty-third session, the Ghanaian delegation had voted in favour of resolution 33/143. Improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat was a satisfactory response to the wishes of the General Assembly, as expressed in paragraph 3 of part I of the resolution. Co-operation between the Secretariat and Member States would no doubt further improve the status of women in the Secretariat.

43. Mr. MONAYAIR (Kuwait) noted the progress achieved in the various fields mentioned by the Secretary-General in his report, but said that much remained to be done to give full effect to the provisions of General Assembly resolution 33/143. As one of the unrepresented Member States, his country thought it regrettable that almost no progress had been made with respect to the geographical distribution of Secretariat posts. The Secretary-General must take practical steps to improve the situation still further. The idea of a competitive examination to promote General Service staff to the Professional category was excellent, but care must be taken to ensure that the candidates from the various countries took part in the same conditions of objectivity and equality. It was evident that personnel administration in the United Nations was a very exacting task, but his delegation had every confidence in the ability of the Assistant Secretary-General for Personnel Services to succeed. His delegation further proposed the suspension of all recruitment in over-represented countries until the representation of Member States in the Secretariat had reached the point of equilibrium.

44. Mr. JONAH (Assistant Secretary-General for Personnel Services), replying to the delegation of Kenya, among others, said that if the Secretary-General was authorized to show flexibility in applying the principle of the age limit for retirement, as he requested in paragraphs 26 et seq. of his report, there would in any case be a reduction in the number of members of the Secretariat aged over 60. In June 1979 there had been 25 staff members in language posts and 40 General Service staff members who had exceeded the age limit for retirement.

45. Referring to a statement made earlier by the representative of Trinidad and Tobago, he said that the Secretary-General considered that the provision of General Assembly resolution 33/143 stating that no post should be considered the exclusive preserve of any Member State applied to all Member States without exception. For that reason, when a staff member who was a national of an under-represented or marginally represented State separated from the service of the

organization, another national of the same State could be appointed to a post in the same area of the Secretariat, but not necessarily in the same post or at the same level. The Secretary-General thus definitely intended to avoid the automatic transfer of posts to staff members of the same nationality.

46. He assured the representative of the Philippines that all applications for Secretariat posts were very carefully considered, especially when they came from highly qualified persons. The General Assembly had expressed the wish that priority should be given to candidates from Member States which were unrepresented, under-represented or within their desirable ranges. Only if it was impossible to find a candidate in the countries concerned would recruitment be undertaken in an over-represented country. It was not a matter purely and simply of suspending all recruitment in certain Member States, but rather of increasing recruitment in the inadequately represented countries.

47. The guidelines for the recruitment of women in the Secretariat, set out by the Secretary-General in his report were being applied as strictly as possible. If there was no female applicant from an under-represented country, it might be necessary to recruit a female staff member in an over-represented country, or, as a last resort, a male staff member.

48. The representatives of the Philippines and Guyana had expressed concern about the fate of General Service staff who were occupying P-1 and P-2 posts and who were unsuccessful in the competitive examination for promotion to the Professional category to be held in November 1979. Such staff members would continue in United Nations service and would be appointed at the appropriate level.

49. He assured the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic that the Organization did not recruit the spouse of one of its staff members except when the spouse was exceptionally qualified. In any case, no preference was given to a candidate whose spouse was already working in the Secretariat. Besides, such cases were few - there were approximately 40 of them. The spouses most often concerned were those with specific language skills or those who, for example, were attached to such bodies as UNDP. It was interesting to note that 300 staff members had married colleagues after joining the service of the United Nations.

50. The delegation of Chad had remarked on the fact that vacancy bulletins referred only to posts subject to geographical distribution. It should be borne in mind that the posts not dealt with in the vacancy bulletins required specific language skills and were filled by the nationals of a very wide range of Member States. Recruitment examinations for that purpose were organized annually and were regularly announced. Furthermore, the training courses organized by the Economic Commission for Africa had recently resulted in the recruitment of two staff members - an English translator and a French translator. Those results were encouraging and it was intended to continue the scheme. Posts held by staff members who were transferred or promoted were not truly vacant; in conformity with the

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provisions of staff regulation 4.4, such posts were first of all intended for persons already in the service of the United Nations. If that proved impossible, the posts appeared regularly in the vacancy bulletins.

51. Referring to circular ST/IC/79/54 and Add.1, he recalled that 51 posts were earmarked for the competitive examination for promotion to the Professional category.

The meeting rose at 12.10 p.m.