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FIFTH COMMITTEE
50th meeting
held on
Tuesday, 29 November 1983
at 3 p.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 50th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. KUYAMA (Japan)

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

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5 December 1983

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The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 117: UNITED NATIONS COMMON SYSTEM: REPORT OF THE INTERNATIONAL CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION (continued) (A/38/30 and Add.1; A/C.5/38/23 and 40)

1. Mr. RUEDAS (Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management) said, in reply to the question asked by the French delegation regarding the implementation of General Assembly resolution 2480 B (XXIII), that a conference room paper (A/C.5/38/CPR.5) had been distributed showing the number of promotions of staff in posts subject to geographical distribution who were entitled to the benefit of language incentives. He recalled that the resolution in question had authorized the Secretary-General to grant exceptions to the general principle that promotion should be conditional upon confirmed knowledge of a second language. At its twenty-seventh and twenty-eighth sessions, the Secretary-General had advised the General Assembly that it had not been possible to apply that principle rigidly. The Secretary-General had pointed out, however, that the percentage of promotions of staff with a second language had risen from 31 per cent in 1968 to 40.5 per cent in 1973. In 1974, the Fifth Committee had stated in its report on the item that, in special cases, the Secretary-General could continue to apply the resolution flexibly, and that was what the Secretary-General had been doing since that time.
2. The representative of Argentina had asked whether the Secretary-General agreed with the view of one of his predecessors that improving the language training services was preferable to the introduction of a language incentive, and what the Secretariat thought of the view of the majority in ICSC that the incentive was an anomaly, was not achieving its objective and was being restrictively applied. The statement to which the ICSC report referred had been made in 1968 by the then Secretary-General, in commenting on the conclusions of the International Civil Service Advisory Board. The Secretary-General had said that the Board's conclusions merited careful consideration but finally he had proposed both the strengthening of language training arrangements and the introduction of the current language incentive. The term "anomaly" implied a value judgement to which it was difficult to respond. It was true that the incentive was applied in only one organization, but it was the largest in the common system and the one where the political vision of Member States converged. Currently, the percentage of Professional staff with a second language had risen to almost 50 per cent. Thus, while the language incentive had not been completely successful, it had proved a useful tool for improving the linguistic skills of staff members. As he understood it, ICSC had not asked for its elimination but rather had proposed that alternatives should be studied. He felt that until a better alternative was found, the current system should continue.
3. The issue of retirement age had been discussed both under the item on pensions and in connection with the ICSC report. What had started as a technical debate concerned with the financial soundness of the Pension Fund had rapidly become a political discussion centred on geographical distribution and access to decision-making posts. From the Secretariat's point of view, the issue had a third dimension, that of good management.

(Mr. Ruedas)

4. General Assembly resolution 33/143 had requested the Secretary-General to apply the regulations regarding retirement and not to grant extensions beyond the mandatory age of retirement except for the time required to find a suitable replacement, which should not normally be for more than six months. Two years later, resolution 35/210 had specifically requested the Secretary-General not to grant extensions of more than six months after the age of 60. To carry out those two somewhat conflicting instructions, the Secretary-General had adopted a very restrictive approach. In the five years since the adoption of resolution 33/143, there had been only three cases in which the Secretary-General had decided that the interest of the Organization required an extension of more than six months. Such an approach had caused problems, however, since it was not always easy to find a replacement within six months. In the circumstances he felt that, in the interests of good management, the Secretary-General could well be granted a little more flexibility so that in exceptional cases the extension could be for one or even two years. The Office of Personnel Services had established a strict procedure under which a special advisory committee reviewed all applications for extensions, and the same procedure could be applied equally strictly to the period of one or two years if the General Assembly gave the Secretary-General greater latitude. He hoped his suggestion might be taken up by those delegations which were preparing the draft resolution or resolutions on the item.

5. Mr. MERIEUX (France) said that the statements of the Chairman of ICSC and of the Under-Secretary-General on the language incentive had made the position clearer. Nevertheless, his delegation remained in favour of the system instituted by General Assembly resolution 2480 B (XXIII), although it would not oppose such improvements as the extension of the system to UNDP, which would help to remedy the anomalies referred to by ICSC. The linguistic situation in the Secretariat had improved somewhat in recent years, but the figures still showed that the system was not operating perfectly, particularly in respect of promotion. More effective measure could be envisaged for improving the situation still further, including greater attention to language requirements at the time of recruitment. His delegation would welcome any constructive proposal for improving the linguistic balance in the Secretariat. The question could not be reduced, however, to a matter of good personnel management. It was a delicate political problem, and he recalled that resolution 2480 B (XXIII) had been adopted at the initiative of Member States rather than of ICSC. The Secretary-General was in the best position to evaluate the results of the existing system and in due course to present proposals for its improvement.

6. Mr. PIRSON (Belgium) regretted that he had not had time to consider in depth the statement made at the morning meeting by the Chairman of ICSC, since it evoked a whole series of questions that could well be the topic of lengthy debate. He would confine himself, however, to a few of the outstanding points.

7. He wished to know what was to be done about the European duty stations, where the Committee had been told that current levels of post adjustment were 1 per cent to 23 per cent too high. Nothing had been proposed so far by ICSC to stanch that haemorrhage of public funds. Furthermore the change from the WAPA system of

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(Mr. Pirson, Belgium)

calculating pensionable remuneration to the use of the United States Consumer Price Index had meant that in the last year average pensionable remuneration had risen to 137.3 per cent of the base and was still rising. The WAPA system had become unsatisfactory because of the weakness of the United States dollar in Europe, but the dollar had since appreciated against the European currencies. The formula for pensionable remuneration was clearly unreasonable, but the Committee had been told merely that ICSC had not yet reached a conclusion on the desirable level. Yet, ICSC had been asked at the thirty-sixth session of the General Assembly to develop a methodology for comparing total compensation in the United Nations with that in comparator civil service. No such methodology had been presented to the thirty-seventh or the thirty-eighth sessions of the General Assembly and the Committee had now been told only that ICSC hoped to make recommendations to the thirty-ninth session. ICSC must look at the facts: the system as it stood was not yielding reasonable results. He urged ICSC to proceed more rapidly with its work, if necessary by meeting more often.

AGENDA ITEM 116: PERSONNEL QUESTIONS (continued) (A/38/347 and Corr.1; A/C.5/38/10 and Corr.1, 17 and Corr.1 and Add.1, 18 and 29; A/C.5/38/CRP.6)

- (a) COMPOSITION OF THE SECRETARIAT: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued)
- (b) RESPECT FOR THE PRIVILEGES AND IMMUNITIES OF OFFICIALS OF THE UNITED NATIONS AND THE SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND RELATED ORGANIZATIONS: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued)
- (c) OTHER PERSONNEL QUESTIONS: REPORTS OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued)

8. Mr. HOUNGAVOU (Benin) said that, in his recent statement to the Fifth Committee (A/C.5/38/SR.41), the Assistant Secretary-General for Personnel Services had shown an impressive sense of his responsibilities and a determination to define and put into effect a coherent personnel policy that would take into account all the essential concerns expressed by Member States in General Assembly resolutions 35/210 and 37/235. His delegation recognized the efforts that had already been made to improve the geographical distribution of posts in the Secretariat without sacrificing the paramount criterion of competence. It noted, however, that the question of over-representation still remained, and it could not agree that the Office of Personnel Services had little control over the matter. It would like to see a serious attack made on the problem, and more information supplied to the Committee in that regard, thus enabling it to help the Office of Personnel Services to move towards greater justice and equity. Strict application of the principle of equitable geographical distribution should allow the nationals of other Member States to occupy some of the high-level posts held uninterruptedly by the nationals of a few countries since the establishment of the United Nations. His delegation was opposed to any increase in the retirement age, which was a ploy aimed at perpetuating the domination of senior posts in the Secretariat by a handful of States.

9. His delegation was prepared to support a new more comprehensive personnel policy that would replace the current piecemeal and arbitrary approach,

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(Mr. Hougavou, Benin)

particularly with regard to recruitment and the filling of decision-making posts. Recruitment for posts at the D-1 level and above was governed by unspecified criteria, and the anomalies to which it led were clearly revealed in Conference Room Paper No. 6. The situation was unacceptable and should be corrected without delay.

10. The Assistant Secretary-General had referred in his statement to the need to strengthen the role played by the Office of Personnel Services within the Secretariat. That was vital for the correct application of the new personnel policy which the Secretary-General intended to present at the thirty-ninth session of the General Assembly. Excessive decentralization tended to dilute responsibility for a coherent and orderly personnel policy. His delegation had never believed in allowing department heads to draw up and apply their own personnel policies, thereby relegating OPS to the role of a mere record-keeper. It was therefore in favour of strengthening the authority of the Office of Personnel Services, bearing in mind the Staff Rules and the established administrative hierarchy. The recommendations of the Committee of Governmental Experts to Evaluate the Present Structure of the Secretariat in the Administrative, Finance and Personnel Areas should guide the Secretary-General in defining the role of the Office of Personnel Services in drawing up and implementing a new personnel policy based on human resources planning.

11. Another important matter was respect for the privileges and immunities of staff members of the United Nations and the specialized agencies. The report submitted by the Secretary-General in response to resolution 36/232 (A/C.5/38/17) gave details of arrests in certain troubled areas which called for the Fifth Committee's attention. Benin attached great importance to respect for the privileges and immunities of staff members, while also believing that they must comply fully with the local laws and security regulations of the countries in which they served. Benin respected all those privileges and imposed no limitation on their enjoyment.

12. The social problems of staff members at some duty stations were another matter of concern to his delegation, but he would revert to that matter during the examination of the ICSC report. He noted in conclusion that a draft resolution had been circulated regarding health insurance contributions by the Organization (A/C.5/38/L.12), which merited attention, although it conflicted somewhat with the recommendations of the Secretary-General (A/C.5/38/16) and those of the staff as presented in document A/C.5/38/29.

13. Mr. MAYCOCK (Barbados) said that General Assembly resolutions 33/143, 35/210 and 37/235 contained the guidelines which, if followed in letter and in spirit, would lead to a comprehensive, coherent and fair personnel policy. It was the hope of his delegation, therefore, that the references which had been made by the Assistant Secretary-General for Personnel Services to a new personnel policy applied to new approaches aimed at achieving the goals and objectives of those resolutions and did not reflect any intention of deviating from them.

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(Mr. Maycock, Barbados)

14. His delegation noted that some progress had been made in reducing the number of unrepresented countries. It was, however, disappointed that the goals set for the recruitment and promotion of women were just barely in sight. There was an urgent need to ensure the distribution of higher echelon posts on a broader geographical basis. His delegation looked forward to serious efforts by OPS in the period ahead to redress the existing imbalances in recruitment and promotion.

15. He welcomed the intention of OPS to work out a career development plan. It was to be hoped that such a plan would indeed lead to promotion on the basis of merit and performance so that staff would be able to devote their talents and energies entirely to their tasks in the Secretariat. A comprehensive and effective career development plan, which should include a computerized roster of staff, would go a long way toward solving many of the problems now being encountered by staff in the General Service aspiring to promotion to the Professional category. It would, for example, make it feasible for General Service staff who had demonstrated their aptitude for professional work to be appointed to vacancies as they occurred without having to prove themselves over and over again. The Fifth Committee should attempt to deal with the problems connected with the competitive examination for promotion from the General Service to the Professional category in that context rather than accept the proposal contained in paragraph 33 of document A/C.5/38/29. His delegation had no difficulty in supporting the appeal by the staff representatives to strengthen the independence of the United Nations Secretariat and promote the security of its staff. It was self-evident that, if international civil servants were to perform their functions effectively, they must enjoy the protection of international organizations and Member States. His delegation would continue to support all reasonable efforts towards that end.

16. He appealed to Member States, the Administration and the staff alike, to recapture some of the spirit of idealism which had led to the founding of the Organization. All must put aside their narrow sectarian interests, and the fate of the Organization as a whole must take precedence over any individual, group of individuals or country.

17. Mr. TOMASZEWSKI (Poland) said that the Secretariat played an important role in the overall functioning of the Organization. It was essentially on the Secretariat that the implementation of the decisions of United Nations organs depended. There were at least two reasons why his delegation wished to state its views on personnel questions at the current session. The first was that the Secretariat now had a new Assistant Secretary-General for Personnel Services and the second was that the Secretary-General had devoted much space to personnel questions in his report on the work of the Organization (A/38/1). It was regrettable that that very important report had not been listed as part of the Fifth Committee's documentation under the item, since it reflected the main problems facing the chief administrative officer of the Organization.

18. In his report, the Secretary-General had pointed out that rigid directives in the area of personnel could be counter-productive and might not always be conducive to the smooth functioning or efficient administration of the Organization. Many of the resolutions on personnel questions adopted by the Fifth Committee in recent years had been very lengthy and detailed, and the Committee should seek to avoid such shortcomings in any future resolution it might adopt on the subject.

(Mr. Tomaszewski, Poland)

19. On the subject of equitable geographical distribution, the Secretary-General had observed that, while all professed their dedication to the principles of independent and objective international administration, few Member States refrained from trying to bring pressure to bear in favour of their own particular interests, especially in the personnel sphere. There was thus a great need for political good will and action to promote the general interest of the Organization.

20. With regard to the new personnel policy announced by the Assistant Secretary-General for Personnel Services, his delegation had consistently maintained that the future capacity of the Secretariat depended on an effectively planned policy based on fixed-term contracts. A flexible policy of rotation could both maintain a core of career staff and infuse more imaginative thinking and a spirit of action into the Secretariat in contrast to the bureaucracy and routine which currently prevailed. It would ensure that new talent was systematically brought into the Organization, increase flexibility and facilitate the achievement of a more equitable geographical distribution of posts. The Fifth Committee had been told that the morale of some staff members was low because they were not sure of their futures. It was, however, impossible for any employer to give an employee a priori assurances about his career. In the view of his delegation, the equitable solution to the problem was for Governments to provide their nationals with appropriate employment in their national civil services after separation from the Secretariat. That would automatically eliminate uncertainty and low morale among the staff.

21. A system based on fixed-term contracts would probably also eliminate the problems relating to retirement policy and the financial situation of the Pension Fund. However, there again, it was incumbent upon Governments to accept responsibility for their nationals who dedicated their lives to civil service careers. His country, for its part, tried to submit its best candidates for appointment to the Secretariat and provided them with employment on their return to Poland after their United Nations service.

22. Another benefit of a system based on fixed-term contracts would be to reduce the use of outside experts and consultants to perform tasks which should be assigned either to regular staff or to younger, better prepared experts. In that connection, he pointed out that very few experts from eastern European countries had so far been employed by the United Nations, and that situation was not in any way due to a lack of highly qualified individuals from that geographical region.

23. His delegation was deeply convinced that the highest standards of competence were in no way incompatible with respect for the principle of equitable geographical distribution. Otherwise, it would be difficult to imagine a genuinely international Secretariat. His delegation was confident that the new personnel policy announced by the Assistant Secretary-General would ensure that objective as well, in spite of bureaucratic resistance to all efforts aimed at modernization and improvement and the opposition of certain departments to the recruitment of young people who had been successful in the competitive examinations.

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(Mr. Tomaszewski, Poland)

24. With regard to the employment of women, he took note of the action described in paragraph 14 of document A/38/347 and doubted whether drawing the attention of heads of departments to the proportion of female staff members in the organizational unit concerned was sufficient to give effect to the decisions of the General Assembly. His delegation trusted that the new personnel policy would also cover senior posts in the Secretariat so that the Secretary-General would be able to discharge all of his responsibilities.

25. He noted with concern that the number of staff members from other duty stations who travelled to Headquarters for the sessions of the General Assembly was constantly growing. That practice unnecessarily increased the Organization's expenses and affected staff morale. A strange form of tourism seemed to be taking place at the expense of the Organization. He strongly urged that staff travel should be considerably reduced, and requested the Secretariat to submit a conference room paper providing detailed information on official travel by staff from other duty stations to New York in connection with the thirty-eighth session of the General Assembly, including a brief substantiation for the travel in each case and its total costs. His delegation was not opposed to official travel when justified but was firmly convinced that much could be done to limit travel to those cases in which it was truly necessary.

26. Mr. RALLIS (Greece), speaking on behalf of the 10 States members of the European Economic Community (EEC), said that the policy outlined by the Assistant Secretary-General for Personnel Services in his statement to the Committee represented a sound basis for personnel management along the lines laid down in the relevant General Assembly resolutions. There was a clear need for a planned approach to personnel matters. The medium-term recruitment plan for 1983-1985 and the annual work plan for 1983 were practical tools which should enable OPS to remedy an unsatisfactory situation, specifically with regard to geographical distribution and the representation of women in the Secretariat. He welcomed the Assistant Secretary-General's confirmation that efficiency would continue to be the paramount consideration in the employment of staff.

27. The 10 EEC countries welcomed the Secretariat's renewed commitment to meeting the established recruitment targets by the end of 1985. They looked forward to the report on that subject to be submitted by the Secretary-General at the thirty-ninth session.

28. He expressed disappointment at the slow progress made in the recruitment of women. There was very little chance that the 25 per cent target for the proportion of women in the Professional category would be soon met. That target should not be regarded as the last word; consideration should be given to increasing it to 30 per cent by the end of the Decade for Women in 1985. The Secretariat and Member States should intensify their efforts to identify and nominate female candidates on an equal basis with men and in accordance with the principle of equitable geographical distribution.

29. Similar considerations of equality should prevail in the formulation of a career development plan and promotion criteria. More should be done throughout the

(Mr. Rallis, Greece)

system to promote the representation of women, and qualified female staff members should be given equal opportunity to advance to senior and decision-making posts. The 10 EEC countries reaffirmed their support for the request in resolution 35/210 that the Secretary-General should designate a high-level official to co-ordinate efforts to improve the situation of women in the United Nations.

30. The EEC countries looked forward to the report to be submitted by the Secretary-General on a comprehensive career development scheme. A consistent and rational promotion policy based, inter alia, on competence, efficiency and mobility could make the career of all staff members somewhat more predictable and thereby improve morale. They reaffirmed their support for General Assembly resolution 27/126, which welcomed the International Civil Service Commission's study on career development and related questions, and they called for the early implementation of the ICSC recommendations. They also welcomed the comments made by the Assistant Secretary-General on the subject of staff-management relations. A frank and open dialogue between the Administration and the staff should lead to better understanding and co-operation, without detracting from the position of the Secretary-General as chief administrative officer. The EEC countries agreed on the necessity of reinforcing the authority of the Office of Personnel Services in all personnel matters.

31. Respect for the privileges and immunities of officials of the United Nations, the specialized agencies and related organizations, was a matter of great concern to the EEC countries. They welcomed the measures taken by the Secretary-General to monitor individual cases of arrest and detention and improve the relevant administrative procedures. He noted that the solution of a number of cases had been facilitated by dispatching a senior UNDP official to the countries where staff members were detained. Other organizations might consider similar action in the event that other channels were not productive. While the number of officials under arrest or detention had declined, more needed to be done to ensure the safety and security of international civil servants. He welcomed the news of the release of many of UNRWA staff members and urged the authorities concerned to respond promptly and positively to UNRWA's request to be informed of the arrest of any of its staff and of the reasons for the arrest so that it could judge whether the arrest related to the official function of the staff member concerned. UNRWA should also be granted access to its detained staff members. Article 105 of the Charter and articles V and VI of the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nation must be observed by all Member States. Staff members, for their part, had an obligation to observe the laws and regulations of host countries in the conduct of their duties. He called upon the Secretary-General to continue his efforts to improve the security of international civil servants and emphasized the importance of the personal commitment of the Secretary-General to that objective. The 10 EEC countries hoped that in his next annual report the Secretary-General would be able to announce a substantial improvement in the situation.

32. Ms. van DRUNEN LITTEL (Netherlands) noted that, according to the information provided in the report on the composition of the Secretariat (A/38/347), the Netherlands was an under-represented country. That situation had come about about as a result of the upward revision in her country's desirable range. However, even

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(Ms. van Drunen Littel, Netherlands)

before the revision, the Netherlands had been only just within its desirable range. Moreover, its position in the Secretariat was precarious given the ratio between nationals of the Netherlands who held fixed-term contracts and those holding permanent appointments. Noting that there had been little or no improvement in her country's representation in the Secretariat in 1983, she expressed the hope that the Assistant Secretary-General would make efforts to remedy the situation and pledged her delegation's co-operation towards that end.

33. Mr. BOUYOUCEF (Algeria) welcomed the fact that the Office of Personnel Services was taking an overall view of the whole system of personnel management. A new departure had certainly been overdue, since the Organization's personnel procedures, which had a direct effect on the capacity of the Secretariat to serve the international community, had developed very slowly and were not well adapted to present-day needs, whereas the extent and complexity of Secretariat activities had constantly grown.

34. In previous years a number of important personnel reforms had indeed been introduced, particularly the use of competitive examinations to recruit to posts at the P-1 and P-2 levels, but further reforms were still needed.

35. He noted with satisfaction from the statement by the Assistant Secretary-General for Personnel Services (A/C.5/38/SR.41) that the medium-term recruitment plan had been put into effect and that the Office of Personnel Services would be able to direct its recruitment efforts towards improving the geographical distribution of posts and the representation of women in the Secretariat. With the support of the Secretary-General and the full co-operation of the substantive departments and Member States, the aims of the plan could certainly be achieved.

36. His delegation welcomed the intention of OPS to submit a career development plan to the next session of the General Assembly. Owing to the geographical dispersion of the staff, the range of occupations involved and the geopolitical composition of the Secretariat, such an undertaking would be difficult. Nevertheless a career development plan was becoming increasingly necessary to ensure effective human resources management.

37. Algeria shared the concern of Japan and Austria over continuity in the implementation of personnel reforms. There had been three Assistant Secretaries-General for Personnel Services over the past four years. An organization as complex as the United Nations required a certain continuity to ensure the implementation of effective policies. It was also essential to reaffirm the rather blurred authority of the Office of Personnel Services. The Secretary-General should provide the necessary support to OPS, in accordance with the wishes of the General Assembly, to ensure that the proposed reforms would not remain a dead letter.

38. The responsibility of the Office of Personnel Services for recruitment was spelled out in General Assembly resolution 35/210. The resolution seemed, in practice, to have been interpreted as giving substantive departments the

(Mr. Bouyoucef, Algeria)

prerogative to recruit their preferred candidates despite any reservations on the part of OPS, whose mandate was to ensure equitable geographical distribution. His delegation wished the Committee to be given an annual breakdown by department of the candidates recruited for geographical posts to enable it to analyse the geographical distribution in each department and the efforts made to improve it.

39. The Secretary-General's report on the composition of the Secretariat (A/38/347) indicated that 96 countries were not represented at the D-2 level or above, while 61 countries shared the 142 geographical posts at those levels. It should be noted in that connection that such posts were not governed by the internal promotion procedure, but were subject to the discretion of the Secretary-General. His delegation was dissatisfied with the unequal representation of Member States, particularly that of developing countries. It was to be hoped that firm action would be taken to rectify the situation within a reasonable period. Equitable geographical distribution, which reflected the international nature of the Secretariat and ensured that nationals of all Member States participated in its activities, was of particular importance at the higher levels. Future reports by the Secretary-General on the composition of the Secretariat should contain more detailed information on that matter.

40. Mr. ERDEMBAT (Mongolia) said that he shared the view of many other delegations that the United Nations Secretariat must reflect the international character of the Organization in an accurate and balanced manner. To that end, the principle of equitable geographical distribution enshrined in Article 101 of the Charter and confirmed by General Assembly resolutions must be strictly observed. Therefore, more candidates from unrepresented and under-represented countries must be appointed to the Secretariat. There were indeed some positive trends in the present recruitment policy, and they should be strengthened, but much still remained to be done to correct certain abnormalities in recruitment practices.

41. One factor which militated against full implementation of the principle of equitable geographical distribution was the continuation of the system of permanent contracts, which had a generally negative effect on the composition of the Secretariat and prevented the recruitment of many young and highly qualified candidates. No more permanent contracts should be given, and such contracts must ultimately be eliminated altogether. Also, no more candidates should be recruited from over-represented countries.

42. It was important to observe the principle of equitable geographical distribution at all levels, and particularly at the higher and middle levels. Scrupulous observance of the United Nations Charter and the recommendations of the General Assembly would do a great deal to increase the effectiveness of the work of the Secretariat.

43. Mr. PAVLOVSKY (Czechoslovakia) said that his delegation appreciated the positive efforts made by the Secretary-General and OPS to implement a sound personnel policy. The personnel reforms initiated by the Secretary-General would improve geographical balance and the effectiveness of the staff.

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(Mr. Pavlovsky, Czechoslovakia)

44. Nevertheless, his delegation was concerned over the implementation of the principle of equitable geographical distribution. Any shortcomings which had arisen with regard to that principle were attributable to members of the Secretariat and not to the principle itself. Staff members had a responsibility to work in accordance with established principles and to solve any problems which might arise in their implementation.

45. The Secretariat's slow and inefficient recruitment procedures, particularly in the case of candidates from socialist countries, were disappointing. The impact of recruitment on geographical distribution was limited by the fact that over two thirds of the incumbents in geographical posts held permanent contracts. Consequently, it was all the more important to speed up recruitment procedures so as to select candidates within a reasonable time. Yet, it generally happened that posts remained unfilled for months or even years, until, on occasion, they simply disappeared as a result of internal transfers of posts. Many candidates from socialist countries suffered from such practices, while others were rejected with no adequate explanation.

46. It seemed that the system of job descriptions and vacancy announcements was a sort of game of deception between OPS and substantive departments, with the candidate playing very little part. Often OPS was relegated to the role of middleman between substantive departments and candidates, with very little influence over the final decision.

47. Heads of individual offices in the Secretariat had great latitude in personnel matters. His delegation doubted that their authority was always used in the best interests of the Organization. Very often, substantive departments pursued their own narrow interests by selecting candidates not on merit but on the basis of personal considerations. Some heads of departments were apt to use any means to reject candidates from socialist countries. His delegation strongly disagreed with such practices.

48. There was an urgent need for the Secretary-General, in co-operation with OPS, to pursue a vigorous policy of streamlining recruitment procedures, and to strengthen the authority of OPS in all personnel matters, particularly recruitment. That could be accomplished without diminishing collaboration among OPS, substantive offices and the appointment and promotion bodies.

49. The success of efforts to improve the unsatisfactory distribution of posts among countries and between men and women depended on the implementation of such measures. His delegation was dissatisfied with the fact that the relative under-representation of the Eastern European States had increased over the past four years. His own country was well below the lower limit of its desirable range, and expected the Secretariat to remedy the situation. It seemed, too, that the Secretariat was unable to cope with the problem of over-representation. It would be of interest to know how many nationals of over-represented countries had been recruited during the past year and why they had been recruited. Unrepresented and under-represented countries could not be brought within their desirable ranges without simultaneously reducing the level of over-representation. Greater efforts were also necessary to tackle the continued under-representation of women.

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(Mr. Pavlovsky, Czechoslovakia)

50. With regard to the proposed career development plan, his delegation did not support any concept based on the presumption that the longer a staff member stayed with the Secretariat, the more qualified he became. Indiscriminate implementation of such a principle would lead to a situation in which an ever-increasing majority of geographical posts, particularly at the decision-making level, would be occupied by career staff. That would leave little room for the recruitment of fresh staff, which was necessary to reflect the changing nature of the Organization's tasks. The end result would be a firmly established bureaucratic and self-sufficient body, remote from world developments and unresponsive to the General Assembly. His delegation was therefore not convinced of the need to pursue career development proposals as a matter of priority. It would have been better to have considered ways of reducing the number of permanent contracts to the bare minimum and of increasing the alarmingly small number of fixed term appointments.

51. His delegation was concerned over any limitation of the authority vested in the Secretary-General under the Charter, as the chief administrative officer, since it might undermine the authority of the Charter itself. Czechoslovakia did, of course, support measures aimed at improving staff management relations and at ensuring good working conditions, since they were prerequisites for the effective functioning of the Secretariat. His delegation did not question the dedication, capability and personal honesty of staff members, or that the staff had to have a say in how to conduct work more efficiently. Yet steps which went beyond that, and which might undermine effective management, should be considered with the utmost caution. Lastly, his delegation was not convinced of the appropriateness of the proposals relating to grievance procedures.

52. Mr. ASHOUR (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) emphasized the importance of reforming the administrative structure of the Secretariat and of correcting imbalances which had arisen through non-observance of General Assembly resolutions. In particular, the Organization's recruitment policies reflected the interests of certain Secretariat officials and Member States to the detriment of the vast majority. The relevant resolutions pertaining to equitable geographical distribution should be implemented, in accordance with Article 101 of the Charter.

53. His delegation favoured increasing the number of posts subject to geographical distribution.

54. Despite the adoption of various General Assembly resolutions, the distribution of posts between developing and developed countries was inequitable, as was that between developing countries themselves. A limited number of developing countries monopolized Secretariat posts, while four Arab States were under-represented. The imbalance at the higher levels was particularly pronounced, almost two thirds of Member States having no representatives at the D-2 level or above. The provisions of General Assembly resolutions 35/210 and 37/235 should be fully respected in that connection.

55. The trend towards recruiting nationals of over-represented countries on permanent contracts undermined the principle of equitable geographical

(Mr. Ashour, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya)

distribution. Some senior officials acted as though their departments were their own private fiefdoms, and sought to perpetuate the predominance of certain groups. In that context it was important to appoint more women, and to ensure that they were not discriminated against with respect to promotion.

56. The general debate on the programme budget had revealed the exaggerated costs incurred by the United Nations in certain areas which did not further the interests of Member States. For example, travel and subsistence were included in the funding for projects executed by the Organization.

57. With regard to the distribution of posts at the D-2 level and above, he pointed out that there were no Libyan nationals in senior positions. In fact his country was well below its desirable range. His delegation had endeavoured to draw the attention of the Secretariat to that state of affairs, but despite his Government's nomination of highly qualified candidates they had not been considered, although every year new recruits were appointed from over-represented countries. For example, between 1 July 1982 and 30 June 1983, 26 nationals of over-represented Member States, amounting to 9.4 per cent of the total, had been appointed to geographical posts.

58. His delegation regretted the practice of some departments within the Secretariat which chose candidates on the basis of non-objective considerations, in contravention of Article 101 of the Charter. No post should be monopolized by a particular country. Member States should reconsider recruitment practices, and, indeed, monitor recruitment procedures so as to end the current monopoly.

59. With regard to the privileges and immunities of United Nations officials, his delegation was opposed to the arrests of UNRWA officials by occupation forces in violation of their rights and those of the Secretary-General, and in contravention of the relevant General Assembly resolutions.

60. Mrs. MUSTONEN (Finland), speaking also on behalf of Denmark, Iceland, Norway and Sweden, said that the five Nordic delegations welcomed the forward-looking approach to personnel policy outlined by the Assistant Secretary-General for Personnel Services. The framework of integrated human resource planning, as proposed also by the International Civil Service Commission and confirmed by the General Assembly in its resolution 37/235, was an attempt to adjust the different elements of personnel policy to the overall needs of the Organization.

61. There was also a need for close ties between programme planning and budgeting on the one hand, and personnel policy on the other. Greater co-ordination might perhaps shed some light on the reasons behind the decline in the number of posts at the P-1 and P-2 levels.

62. The Nordic delegations welcomed the decrease in the number of unrepresented Member States and the increase in the number of countries which had been brought within their desirable ranges. Nevertheless, the proportion of under-represented countries had remained at about 15 per cent over the last five years.

(Mrs. Mustonen, Finland)

63. The status of women in the United Nations Secretariat had been a matter of constant concern to the Nordic delegations. During the last few years the General Assembly had taken many decisions reaffirming equality of opportunity for men and women in the Secretariat and had set the target of 25 per cent for the proportion of women in Professional posts subject to geographical distribution by the year 1982. That target had been reaffirmed in General Assembly resolutions 35/210 and 37/235 but the Secretary-General's current report on the composition of the Secretariat showed that the percentage of women in the Professional category had risen only from 22.2 per cent in 1982 to 22.3 per cent in 1983, the smallest increase in any year since the target had been set. The Nordic delegations welcomed the increase in the number of women at the P-4 and D-1 levels, achieved by recruitment and promotion but there was still a disquieting over-concentration of female staff at the levels from P-1 to P-3, which indicated that little progress had been made towards equal employment of women and men in the Professional and higher categories. The United Nations had a special responsibility to set an example in the recruitment of women, while Member States should assist by finding suitable female candidates. Other measures would also help; for example, it was gratifying that the United Nations child care centre had started operations. That was a positive step towards the creation of equal opportunities for men and women with small children to take an active part in the working life of the United Nations community.

64. It was difficult to make real economic and social progress unless men and women shared equally in responsibilities and benefits. Therefore, a number of legislative actions had been taken in the Nordic countries with the aim of achieving equal treatment of men and women.

65. The Nordic delegations expressed appreciation for the efforts of the Secretary-General and the executive heads of specialized agencies to ensure the safety and protection of international civil servants. They were seriously concerned over the number of cases of the arrest and detention of staff members reported by the Secretary-General. The five delegations believed that it was a matter for the Secretary-General or the executive head alone to determine the extent of the functions of a particular official and it was therefore of paramount importance that the Secretary-General or his representative should have access to arrested or detained staff members in order to decide whether there was any link between the arrest or detention and the person's functions as an international official and, if so, whether immunity should be waived. At the same time, the five Nordic delegations were pleased to note the Secretary-General's belief that the discussion of respect for United Nations privileges and immunities had contributed to a greater understanding among Member States of the Organization's right of protection of its officials in the discharge of their duties. That right was established by the United Nations Charter, two conventions adopted by the General Assembly, and a number of General Assembly resolutions, the Staff Regulations and Staff Rules and the Secretary-General's recent bulletin on the security, safety and independence of the international civil service and his administrative instruction on reporting of arrest or detention of staff members and members of their families. The Nordic delegations agreed with the Secretary-General's statement in

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(Mrs. Mustonen, Finland)

his report that it did not seem possible at present to go beyond those specific guidelines, and that attention should be focused on their prompt application by all concerned. The Nordic delegations were therefore ready to support the practical measures proposed by the Secretary-General in his report (A/C.5/38/17, para. 18).

66. Mr. TOMMO MONTHE (United Republic of Cameroon) said that since Member States continued to call upon the Secretariat to undertake an increasing variety of tasks, the Secretary-General should make an analysis of those tasks, assess the capacity of the Secretariat to perform them and then recommend measures to adapt the organization and composition of the Secretariat and the quality and conditions of service of its staff more fully to the expectations of Member States. Such an exercise could be carried out at specific intervals, for example when preparing the international development strategy for a decade or the medium-term plan in order to give Member States an opportunity of agreeing on the broad administrative measures necessary to support the activities to be undertaken. It was significant that most of the reforms introduced in the last few years had been given only a lukewarm welcome by Member States, and that those States had not made any in-depth study of the measures set out in the section on administration and management in the medium-term plan, even though those measures fell far short of what was required to sustain the proposed activities. Therefore, any reorganization of the Secretariat should be synchronized with major programming cycles and with the objectives by Member States.

67. With regard to the composition of the Secretariat, the recruitment plan designed to bring all unrepresented and under-represented States to the midpoint of their desirable range by 1985 seemed to be producing results, but the Office of Personnel Services must still be vigilant to ensure that progress was maintained, and that the Member States which were satisfactorily represented continued to be so. The geographical composition of individual departments and offices should also be scrutinized in order to avoid the concentration of a few nationalities in the same administrative unit. He asked for the details of the procedures which the Secretary-General had established to monitor progress in ensuring wide geographical distribution throughout the Secretariat (A/38/347, para. 10).

68. Progress continued to be slight with regard to the distribution of staff in posts at the D-2 level and above, and Africa continued to be the region which had the most States unrepresented at those levels.

69. The system of desirable ranges must be interpreted with care, since it was a relative matter. The Secretariat would no doubt bear in mind that the General Assembly in its resolution 35/210 had decided to review at its forty-first session the question of desirable ranges. His delegation continued to think that the membership factor should be given greater weight or that a sliding scale for the distribution of vacant posts should be established for a specific time in the annual recruitment plans, so that a more appropriate balance could be struck between the membership and contribution factors.

(Mr. Tommo Monthe, United
Republic of Cameroon)

70. With regard to career development, his delegation continued to stress the need for a pragmatic approach based on an analysis of the activities mandated by United Nations legislative bodies and the interests of staff members, the Secretariat and Member States. Therefore, career development should be part of an integrated planning of the human resources of the Secretariat, which should help to solve some of the problems of vertical and lateral mobility referred to by the staff in paragraphs 22 to 27 of their submission (A/C.5/38/29).

71. The report of the Secretary-General on respect for the privileges and immunities of officials of the United Nations and the specialized agencies and related organizations (A/C.5/38/17) showed that there had been a number of violations. The Secretary-General's bulletin and administrative instruction and the additional measures which he proposed in paragraph 18 of that report seemed appropriate. The single case of detention reported in the United Republic of Cameroon had involved a locally recruited staff member suspected of possessing fraudulently obtained goods; he had been released a few days later. The obligation of Member States regarding privileges and immunities must of course find their counterpart in exemplary conduct by staff members in accordance with staff regulation 1.4.

72. The suggestions put forward by the Secretariat (A/C.5/38/29) regarding salaries and allowances and other matters should be considered sympathetically, within the limit of existing possibilities and subject to the comments and recommendations of the Secretary-General and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions. Possibly the special advisory group appointed by the Secretary-General could consider the matter and make recommendations which the Assembly might consider at a subsequent session.

73. Following the report of the Committee of Governmental Experts to Evaluate the Present Structure of the Secretariat in the Administrative, Finance and Personnel Areas, the General Assembly had given additional authority to the Office of Personnel Services. That Office had since prepared a master plan for recruitment and career development including arrangements for staff consultation with the aim of achieving a personnel policy which would enable the Organization to meet the demands of Member States. The development of that plan must be encouraged.

The meeting rose at 6.15 p.m.