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JOINT INSPECTION UNIT

PERSONNEL QUESTIONS

Personnel policy options and second report on the career concept

Comments of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the members of the General Assembly the comments of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination on the reports of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled "Personnel policy options" (A/36/432 and Add.1) and "Second report on the career concept" (A/37/528). Appended to the text of the comments is a statement submitted by the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination to the International Civil Service Commission, which contains the considered expression of the views of the executive heads of the organizations of the common system as to what is desirable and feasible with regard to the concepts of career, types of appointment, career development and related questions.

Comments of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination
on the reports of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled
"Personnel policy options" and "Second report on the
career concept"

1. In accordance with the procedure established by article 11, paragraph 4 (e), of the statute of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) with respect to reports of the Unit concerning more than one organization, the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination (ACC) has prepared the following joint comments on the reports of the Unit entitled "Personnel policy options" and "Second report on the career concept" for submission, together with those reports, to the competent organs of the several organizations.
2. The first report (JIU/REP/81/11) was transmitted to the members of the General Assembly by the Secretary-General under cover of document A/36/432 and Add.1; the comments presented at that time by the Secretary-General of the United Nations in document A/36/432/Add.2 contained three paragraphs (6 to 8) transmitting the preliminary views of ACC, to the effect that "the questions of personnel policy dealt with in the JIU report are essentially of the kind on which a co-ordinated approach must be taken by the organizations together if the common system is to be maintained and enhanced" (para. 6). ACC therefore urged that any decisions taken on these questions "should be based on a comprehensive view of the problems and needs of the common system as a whole, so that policies can be adopted for each organization by its own governing organs which would be co-ordinated but would at the same time be applicable within the individual organizations" (para. 7). The report of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled "Second report on the career concept" (JIU/REP/82/3) was transmitted to the Members of the Assembly by a note of the Secretary-General (A/37/52). In the introductory note, the inspectors emphasize that the two reports must be considered together and specify that, as they "deal with policy issues regarding the over-all approach to the international civil service ... they are intended for all the organizations of the United Nations system".
3. In preparing these comments, ACC has borne in mind that the General Assembly, in its resolution 35/210 of 17 December 1980, had called for reports on "the subjects of the concepts of career, types of appointment, career development and related questions" from both the Joint Inspection Unit and the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) and, at its thirty-sixth session, in resolution 36/233 of 18 December 1981, had listed this study as one of those to the completion of which it requested ICSC to give high priority so that it could report on them at the thirty-seventh session; the Assembly further invited ICSC to take into account, inter alia, "the relevant reports of the Joint Inspection Unit", i.e. the two present reports. ACC has consequently correlated the views that it has provided to ICSC to assist it in the preparation of its report with its comments on the reports of JIU, so as to facilitate the presentation of a single report on the subject to the legislative bodies. Its main comments of substance are contained in the statement to ICSC (the text of which is appended hereto), in accordance with ACC's view that the appropriate forum for the examination of common system matters of this kind is ICSC, which was established precisely for that purpose, whose statute

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requires that the views of the executive heads of all the organizations and of the staff be heard before any conclusion is reached and whose practice is to record those views in its reports to the General Assembly and other legislative bodies.

4. The executive heads are fully conscious of the vital importance of questions relating to the concept of the international civil service, the organization of its staff and their conditions of service. An efficient and motivated staff is an essential element in the effectiveness of the organizations in the performance of their constitutional functions. The unity of the international civil service is stated as an objective in the co-ordination agreements between the United Nations and the other organizations and in the statute of ICSC and, as the executive heads recalled in their earlier comments quoted above, it is most desirable that any directives which may be given be capable of application in each of the organizations so that the common nature of the system will be strengthened. In this connexion it must, however, be borne in mind that the organizations which make up the United Nations system have deliberately been created to serve different purposes and so have different programmes, different modes of action and, consequently, differing staffing needs. ACC notes with appreciation the effort which the Inspectors have made in their second report to take into account the diversity of the system, but must caution once again against any attempt to impose on all the organizations patterns which may be appropriate to one of them, the more so as these are matters in which the legislative body of each organization is sovereign and is alone in a position to interpret the decisions of the Member States as to how the needs of that organization can best be served. A common approach is certainly desirable in the interest of developing a unified international civil service, but it must be recognized that there are limits to the extent to which uniformity can be attained among organizations each of which has developed, over a period of 30 or more years, and by decision of its own governing bodies, its own ways of meeting its specific needs in widely varying fields of activity.

5. That said, ACC welcomes the contribution made by Inspectors Bertrand and Khalifa to the consideration of these problems and concurs in the objectives which they set for themselves, in particular in paragraph 5 of the second report. The executive heads agree also (para. 8) that the approaches suggested may be more relevant to the larger organizations, although the differences in the needs of the organizations are not due only to differences in size.

6. The executive heads believe that the first report should be regarded mainly as a description of the problems as seen by the Inspectors. They will address themselves more specifically to the recommendations contained in the second report (some of which modify the conclusions of the first report in a way which the organizations find makes them generally more acceptable).

Recommendation No. 1 (profession and career; occupational groups)

7. ACC recognizes that the pattern of career service in national civil services, as described in paragraphs 14 to 18, was indeed the original model for the secretariats of the League of Nations and the International Labour Office and subsequently for the United Nations system. It would caution, however, against

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trying to transpose this model too precisely to the international civil service in the greatly changed circumstances of today. In addition to career staff of the traditional type, most organizations, particularly those whose activities are more technical and more operationally-oriented, require considerable proportions of specialists who must have acquired advanced qualifications and experience before they can be recruited (and so cannot be appointed at the junior entry grade nor serve for a full career) and whose useful employment with the organizations is often limited to a few years. (It may be noted that some national civil services have also experienced the same need and so have been obliged to modify the traditional employment pattern described in paragraph 16). The functional need of the organizations to employ staff of this kind in increasing proportions does not invalidate wholly the concept of a mainly career service; but, together with other considerations, such as the preference of some Member States that their nationals should serve in the secretariats for only limited periods, it does, in the view of the executive heads, make it necessary to envisage an international civil service in which a considerable proportion of the staff will not serve for a full career. The problem, to which ACC has addressed itself in the views it has presented to ICSC, is then how to maintain the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity in a service thus composed.

8. The executive heads wholeheartedly concur in the importance attached by the Inspectors, in paragraph 18, to ensuring that the staff match up to the highest standards of professional qualification. At the same time, it must not be overlooked that the majority of the specialists required by the organizations and whose professional excellence is no less important are precisely those who do not fit into the pattern of career service, for the reasons indicated above.

9. In any case, the major skill needed by most of the staff, career and otherwise, is the technique of facilitating international co-operation, which usually has as its foundation competence in one or more professional areas but cuts across the bounds of a narrow and rigid concept of professionalism. It would certainly be an exaggeration to claim that "generalists with a sound knowledge of the international organizations are suited to any kind of task and any kind of post" (and no organization would make such a claim); but neither is it true that the professional with excellent qualifications, but which are limited to the strict confines of a profession, can perform the work actually required of an international civil servant within that professional area, still less assume broader managerial responsibilities. Few of the scientists in the United Nations organizations are carrying out research or teaching, few medical doctors are providing clinical care, few telecommunications engineers are operating a broadcasting station; but they are all organizing international co-operation in their professional fields.

10. Consequently the executive heads find that an excessively compartmentalized concept of professionalism is not the concept most relevant to the needs of the international civil service today; what is wanted is not only to reinforce professionalism, to have better doctors, lawyers, scientists, engineers as such, but also - and more importantly - to have professionals who will be more effective as international civil servants, performing the work which international civil servants have to perform.

11. Thus while the definition of occupational groups in the pragmatic way proposed (para. 19) can be of some use as a support for various personnel functions (e.g. selection, career planning and counselling, performance appraisal), its significance as the framework for career development should not be over-emphasized. As recognized in paragraph 22, its usefulness would not generally extend beyond the P-4 level because above that level most managerial posts tend to englobe several professional groups. At best, therefore, it would apply to a career comprising two promotions (P-2 to P-3, P-3 to P-4); but in fact many of the specialists included in the professional groups enter at the P-4 level, if not higher, so that the professional group concept would have little relevance to their careers. While the concept might find application in relation to some groups of professionals, such as personnel and finance administrators, technical co-operation administrators, linguists, librarians, etc., who can be recruited at the P-1 and P-2 levels and can expand and perfect their professional qualifications through training and experience when they are already inside the organization, many other occupational groups would comprise too few staff members to constitute effective career paths or to be used as the basis for career development.

12. The organizations would therefore qualify paragraph A (i) of Recommendation No. 1 to say that standard career paths at the lower and intermediate professional levels will develop mainly in clearly defined occupational groups when these are of sufficient size.

13. Most of the specialized agencies find that the practice described in paragraph 21 of the second report would not be applicable in their particular circumstances; in any case, the occupational groups defined by each organization are unlikely to coincide with those suitable to other organizations, so that a system-wide definition of occupational groups for career development purposes would not be possible.

14. As regards the determining of average rates of advancement for the different occupational groups (para. 30), the organizations would not consider it appropriate that this be done by reference to the experience of the national civil service used as comparator in the application of the Noblemaire principle. The circumstances of a civil service 50 times larger than the international civil service, with a quite different distribution of grades and functions, are of very dubious relevance; moreover the Noblemaire principle has always been interpreted as calling for an overall comparison of the two services, not for separate matchings occupation by occupation or grade by grade.

Recommendation No. 2 (methods of recruitment)

15. The executive heads endorse the Inspectors' call for systematic and rigorous methods of recruitment. Given the nature of their functions and the high degree of specialization of the staff they are recruiting, most organizations are obliged to recruit primarily in terms of specifications established for a particular post (para. 39); they do not disagree, however, that, in recruiting staff expected to remain in service for a long period, their potential for development and their aptitude to perform work at a higher level or broader in scope than that to which they will initially be assigned should be taken into account together with their

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immediate productivity. Moreover, since according to the pattern followed by most organizations, a decision whether the staff member will remain on a long-term basis (whether with a permanent contract or without) will only be taken after the staff member has served for several years on a trial or probationary basis, the assessment of career potential is to some extent relevant to all appointments. However, for all those who, by the nature of their specialization or for other reasons, are expected to serve only for a limited period, their qualification for the particular post for which they are being considered and their ability to perform the functions to the full after only a minimum of adaptation continue to be the most important criteria.

16. While agreeing that written examinations may be useful for testing the educational qualifications of candidates for recruitment at the junior entry grades and noting the experience of the United Nations in this area, most organizations believe that the number of instances where such methods would be applicable is too small to warrant the considerable work and expense entailed; they doubt that even "special or simplified" methods would prove satisfactory for the highly technical groups. They wholeheartedly agree that systematic and rigorous methods of assessment, interviewing and selection should be used at all levels; at the same time, it should not be overlooked that written examinations and tests of knowledge, important as they are, are not the only tools of objective selection (nor are they the only ones used by national civil services). Particularly in assessing such qualities as suitability for work in an inter-cultural milieu, managerial ability and ability to transmit know-how, other means, including structured and systematic interviewing, can counter the risk of subjectivity and improve reliability. The participation of advisory boards or panels in the selection process may also be a guarantee of objectivity, particularly if, as recommended by the Inspectors, specialists from the relevant occupational groups are involved in the process.

17. Thus, while the executive heads endorse the objectives aimed at by the Inspectors in Recommendation No. 2, they consider that the specific measures advocated could only be applied selectively, in conjunction with other appropriate methods and having regard to the type of post being recruited for. They must remark too that their practical ability to make the improvements in their recruitment methods which they well know to be necessary (such as wider prospecting, more recruitment missions, the organization of examinations and tests, more and better interviewing of candidates) depends most of all on more resources becoming available for recruitment. They have no doubt that the extra funds and staff time used for this purpose would be a sound investment in the future efficiency of the staff; but in present circumstances they must recognize that this is only likely to be possible through redeployment of existing resources.

Recommendation No. 3 (career development and promotion)

18. The executive heads agree that career development prospects for serving staff would be enhanced if external recruitment above the entry level were limited; they therefore encourage the maximum use of the junior grades for recruitment. It would, however, not be consistent with the recruitment policies of most organizations to establish limits or percentages for external recruitment at grades above P-2. Such measures could in any case not apply to the recruitment of

qualified specialists, for whom P-3 or P-4 are the entry grades. Accordingly the executive heads do not find paragraphs (a) and (b) of Recommendation No. 3 to be applicable.

19. With regard to the linking of grades (Recommendation 3 (c)), there is not yet a consensus among the organizations. Some hold that linked grades should be used to provide a measure of career progression for staff members continuing in the same functions; they advocate a system where the level of each post is fixed at two grades, such as the P-1/P-2 entry level already existing in a number of organizations, staff members being appointed at the lower of the two grades and subsequently promoted to the upper grade on the basis of strict rules and criteria regarding qualifications and experience. Others note that promotion is not all there is to career and object that the assigning of two grades to a post is incompatible with the principles of job classification and the mechanisms for salary determination. This issue continues to be debated between the organizations and before ICSC, and it is evident that in the meantime it would be inappropriate to attempt to impose a system-wide ruling.

20. The executive heads agree that the requirements of equitable geographical distribution should be met at the stage of recruitment (Recommendation 3 (d)) so that the nationality of a serving staff member need play no part in subsequent career decisions, which should be decided solely on the grounds of the organization's needs and the staff member's merits.

21. With respect to Recommendation 3 (e), it is axiomatic that staff representatives must be consulted regarding the establishment of policies and procedures concerning career development and planning, just as individual staff members must participate in drawing up career plans. The organizations' ability to generalize the preparation of such plans is limited by lack of the considerable additional resources, particularly in staff time, which it would entail.

22. The executive heads concur in the observation that specialists knowledgeable in the professional areas concerned should be involved wherever possible in selection and review bodies; this is already the practice. They cannot go as far as the Inspectors, however, in recommending (Recommendation 3 (f)) that panels constituted within professional groups should replace entirely the existing consultative machinery; the corporate collegial approach should not outweigh the responsibilities of the executive head for the over-all management of the secretariat in a uniform and co-ordinated manner.

23. The executive heads warmly support the better integration of staff training activities into career development (Recommendation 3 (g)); they will offer their detailed suggestions on this subject when ICSC takes up in 1984 the review of staff training which the General Assembly has requested it to make.

Recommendation No. 4 (types of appointment)

24. The executive heads have explained fully in the statement they have presented to ICSC their views regarding the relationship of permanent to fixed-term appointments and the points of coincidence and difference between the three

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concepts of permanent vs. fixed-term employment, continuing vs. non-continuing posts and career vs. non-career staff (cf. paras. 7-21 of the statement, appended hereto). The granting of permanent appointments is in any case subject to the policy established and directives given by the governing organs; the criteria which the organizations consider should apply to the granting of permanent contracts to individual staff members, while similar in intent to those proposed by the Inspectors (para. 62), differ somewhat in detail.

25. The executive heads agree with the statement that "a genuine career system for part of the staff in the Professional category does not necessarily signify that all of the career staff should be granted permanent appointments" (para. 63); the concept of career is not coterminous with the concept of permanent employment. They do not agree, however, with the proposal for the limitation of service on a fixed-term basis to 10 years; they consider that, particularly in those organizations where a limit is imposed on the number of permanent appointments, such a measure would sometimes oblige the organization to deprive itself of the valued services of a staff member whom it wished to retain and who wished to remain and incite some fixed-term staff to leave prematurely, before the investment made in their recruitment and training has been amortized, but while their prospects of reinsertion into other employment are better.

26. As regards the system of "alternating secondments" advocated by the Inspectors, the organizations doubt at first sight that any new form of appointment or other special measures are required, apart from administrative simplifications of the procedures for reappointing such former staff members who return for further service. They have, however, recommended to ICSC that it should study the whole question of secondment in relation to the international civil service, including its legal, contractual and administrative aspects.

Conclusion

27. The executive heads welcome the Inspectors' recognition that reforms of the kind they advocate must take account of the differences between the organizations of the United Nations system (which, they reiterate, are not only differences of size). Despite these differences, the executive heads believe that there is much common ground; any changes which are made should be such that they will tend to strengthen and expand this common ground. The executive heads do not, however, fully share the Inspectors' diagnosis of the problem, in particular the emphasis on occupational groups and on the practices of national civil services as the keys to the remedy. They consider that the international civil service has characteristics which are peculiar to it and the work required of the staff cannot be confined within the traditional definitions of professions. Over the more than three decades that most of the organizations have been in existence they have developed methods of work, including staffing policies, which are deemed by the responsible intergovernmental organs to be the best suited to each organization's needs. Improvements can certainly be made and the executive heads will continue to co-operate with the International Civil Service Commission, as the competent body established for this purpose, in studying the different possibilities and drawing up guidelines as to the direction in which the organizations might move. The perceptive reflexions and suggestions made by the Inspectors in their reports will be a valuable contribution to this ongoing search for greater efficiency.

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APPENDIX

Statement submitted to the International Civil Service Commission
by the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination

1. With a view to assisting the International Civil Service Commission in preparing the report on "concepts of career, types of appointment, career development and related questions" called for by the General Assembly in its resolutions 35/210 and 36/233, the executive heads of the organizations of the common system have approved the following statement of the collective views of the organizations. 1/ This statement is to be read in conjunction with previous statements by ACC and CCAQ, in particular ICSC/R.178 and the comments on the scope of inter-organization co-ordination in matters of personnel policy and the role of ICSC therein reproduced in ICSC/15/R.17/Add.2 together with agreed responses to questions posed by the secretariat of ICSC. Finally, it will be noted that ACC, at the same time as it approved this statement, also drew up the comments it will present to the General Assembly and to the other legislative bodies on the reports of the Joint Inspection Unit on the same subject; copies of these comments will be made available to the members of ICSC.

2. The subjects of career concepts, career development, types of appointment and related questions must be considered in the light of the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations concerning the staff of the Organization and equivalent provisions in the constitutional instruments of the other organizations. Article 100 of the United Nations Charter stipulates the exclusively international character of the responsibilities of the staff. Article 101 states the necessity of securing the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity as the paramount consideration in the employment of the staff and in the determination of their conditions of service; it also requires that due regard be paid to the importance of recruiting the staff on as wide a geographical basis as possible.

3. From the inception of the United Nations system it was taken for granted that the best means of ensuring the highest standards of independence and impartiality in the international civil service was to provide security of tenure for most, if not all, of the staff. This model of a service composed mainly of life-time career officials was inherited by the United Nations from the League of Nations and the International Labour Office, which themselves had taken their pattern from national public services. Most national civil services continue to be organized on this basis: the majority of staff are recruited early in their working life, start their career in the entry levels, can expect reasonably regular progression up the ladder of grades and are assured, in all but the most exceptional circumstances, of continued employment until they reach the age of retirement. In return, the employees, assured of continuing and rewarding employment, can devote their full loyalty to the public service and be expected to resist any attempt to influence them improperly in the performance of their duties.

4. This pattern of employment has undoubtedly been a major force in shaping the international civil service and has played a large part in building up its standards of impartiality and independence. For various reasons, however, the

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international civil service has never been so wholly a career service as most national civil services are; and today the continued applicability of the concept of a career service in the international organizations is more and more questioned. There are three main reasons for this:

(a) Over the past 25 years the organizations have needed to keep a measure of flexibility in the composition of their secretariats in order to be able to adjust to the changing requirements of equitable geographical distribution; while this flexibility will be less needed as progress is made toward the achievement of equitable distribution, it is still, and is likely to continue to be for some time, a significant consideration for most organizations.

(b) Some Member States do not wish their nationals to serve in international organizations for more than limited terms; such staff usually serve on secondment from their country's own career service.

(c) Above all, the functions of the organizations as they have evolved over the years, require particularly for specialized technical work and in operational activities, but also in other functions of limited duration, staff who do not serve a full career with the organization. The training and experience such staff must have cannot be provided within the secretariat, so that they are precluded from being appointed from middle age (the average age of recruitment of the Professional and higher categories is over 40 years) and are consequently appointed at levels higher than the normal entry grades; the organization's functional need for each one's particular combination of qualifications and experience may not last for more than a few years, e.g. the life of single project or of a special conference; many such specialists themselves do not wish to spend more than a limited number of years in international service, preferring to return to the actual exercise of their profession rather than its application to international co-operation. Such staff, whose numbers vary from organization to organization but tend to increase in all organizations, cannot fit into the conventional pattern of full-career international civil servants. Furthermore, the proportion of staff employed in posts financed from voluntary contributions, which carry no guarantee of continuation, has grown; and the organizations are generally wary of the uncertainties of the present times in building up their permanent staff.

5. The proportion of staff holding permanent or career appointments has decreased markedly in recent years in nearly all organizations; and, while there are many long-serving career staff who do not have permanent appointments, it cannot be doubted that in most organizations the place filled by staff members serving for less than a full career is growing. Although traditionally there has been an implicit linkage between the impartiality and independence of the secretariats and career service, it would be a mistake to conclude that, as security of tenure is no longer a dominant pattern of service, the highest standards of impartiality and integrity must necessarily cease to be met. The service offers other incentives to these qualities, such as the special status accorded to international civil servants and the intrinsic appeal of the missions of the organizations. There is no evidence that standards are any different in those organizations which have low proportions of career staff than in the others; nor is there any ground for believing that standards would be higher if all staff were granted permanent

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contracts. There are other ways of upholding the highest standards, such as objective and rigorous recruitment methods and enlightened leadership and management, and these must be energetically pursued. They are without doubt more important to the efficiency of the international civil service than any possible measures regarding the relative proportions of different types of contract.

6. Before examining such possible measures, it is necessary to recall the scope and limits of co-ordination and common action between the various organizations of the United Nations system in matters of personnel policy. The administrations have drawn the attention of the International Civil Service Commission to these constraints in their previous statement (reproduced in ICSC/15/R.17/Add.2). Suffice it to repeat here that the organizations have been created, by design, with different constitutional mandates and so have differing modes of operation and differing staffing needs. Each organization is subject to the sovereign authority of its own legislative and governing bodies which, over the years, have established the budgetary, staffing and other policies which they deem appropriate to the requirements of the organization. This effective and necessary diversity of the organizations must constantly be borne in mind; to attempt to impose on all organizations, in the name of uniformity, a formula which might be found appropriate to one could lead to no useful result. This is not to say that improvements are not needed or cannot be made; and in making them a greater degree of harmonization between the policies and practices of the organizations may incidentally be achieved, so promoting the development of a unified and better international civil service. But for this to be so it is necessary that the differing situation of each organization be taken into account and that the special responsibilities of the deliberative and executive organs of each organization be fully respected.

7. A clear distinction must be made between three concepts which are not synonymous or fully interchangeable:

(a) Permanent vs. fixed-term appointments;

(b) Continuing vs. non-continuing jobs;

(c) Career vs. non-career staff.

8. The administrations renew their endorsement of ICSC's 1979 conclusion that "a core career staff was required in the international civil service and that this core would vary in size from one organization to another depending upon each organization's specific needs" and that "the determination of the proportion of permanent and fixed-term staff be made on an organization-by-organization basis" (A/34/30, paras. 206-207). The administrations concur in the recognition that it would be impractical to attempt to establish system-wide norms in this respect; they would add that given the change in functions and needs within each organization from time to time, it would be inadvisable to set a standing proportion of permanent to fixed-term staff. This is a matter to be judged, as the Commission has said, "primarily by the efficiency of the secretariats to perform their task" and that judgement is one that must be kept under regular review and cannot be separated from responsibility for the conduct of the organization's programme.

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9. As the Commission has also said, "the nature of the functions to be performed, whether continuing or non-continuing" is one of "the criteria by which the needs for permanent or fixed-term staff should be determined" (A/34/30, para. 207). That it is not the sole criterion is shown by the fact that, while continuing jobs may often more efficiently be filled by long-term staff, this is not invariably so; for example, room must be left for flexibility to cope with programme changes, and recently-appointed staff not yet eligible for permanent appointments must be given experience in continuing or "core-type" posts. On the other hand, non-continuing assignments can often most effectively be performed by experienced permanent staff. In some organizations the maximum proportion of permanent staff is in any case fixed by the legislative organs; while an assessment of the extent of continuing functions may be one of the criteria taken into account by the legislative organ, there may be (and often are) other policy considerations that take precedence. That being so, and without minimizing the importance of distinguishing continuing and non-continuing jobs for such purposes as manpower planning, it would seem to be of limited relevance in determining what kind of staff or what mix of different kinds, can best ensure the efficiency of a secretariat.

10. While "career staff", in the sense of those who serve for a full career, includes those who have permanent contracts, care should be taken to avoid the impression that "career" means only tenure and promotions or necessarily implies life-long service. Staff members serving on a fixed-term appointment (or a succession of such appointments) are not excluded from career development and career planning compatible with the length and nature of their employment, as was recognized by the Commission in its fifth annual report (A/34/30, para. 209).

11. The administrations suggest that the term "concepts of career" as used in General Assembly resolution 35/210 should be taken to refer to the question whether the international civil service should be seen as essentially a career service composed of officials serving for a full career. Their answer to this question is clear: while recognizing the contribution that career service can make to ensuring the impartiality and independence of the international civil service, they must also recognize that there are valid reasons for which the competent organs of all organizations have decided that part of the staff cannot be employed on a full-career basis, and those of some organizations have decided to place limits on the proportion of their staff who can be given the guarantee of full-career employment that a permanent contract provides. The administrations do not consider that this situation has been responsible for any falling-off in the standards of impartiality and independence of the international civil service, nor need it be so, provided constant efforts are made to maintain these standards through other means, such as objective and rigorous recruitment methods and enlightened management, and provided that the requisite leadership and support are given to these efforts by the executive heads and by the Member States. The role to be played by ICSC in relation to the administrations, the staff and the Governments, in guiding and promoting these efforts is obviously a privileged one.

Types of appointment

12. While there are variations in the names used for different types of appointment and the conditions attached to them from one organization to another,

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this diversity is more apparent than real. Basically, appointments are of two types: those which are for a prescribed duration and those which are without limit of time. As the administrations stated in ICSC/15/R.17/Add.2, para. 64, they are ready to try to eliminate unnecessary discrepancies in the designation and conditions of the types of appointment in use and will do this in the context of their on-going action to harmonize staff regulations, under article 15 of the Commission's statute. This review will also provide an opportunity for some organizations to see, in the light of their own experience and that of others, whether some of the types of appointment they now use could be dispensed with.

Permanent appointments

13. Questions arise mostly, as might be expected, with respect to appointments with a time limit ("permanent", "indeterminate", "career", etc.). Considering the long-term commitment they represent for the organization, particular care must obviously be taken in granting such appointments. For this reason, the view is increasingly held that a permanent appointment should be offered only after the staff member has served for several years (e.g. between three and six) on two or more successive fixed-term appointments; this (which is already the practice of a number of organizations) allows ample time to judge not only the staff member's work but also his all-round suitability for a career as an international civil servant. It also gives the individual time to make up his or her mind whether he or she is prepared to make the mental commitment to serve in the organization for a substantial period of time, which should be the counterpart on the staff member's side to the commitment which the organization makes that it will continue to employ the staff member up to the age of retirement (apart from the precisely-defined circumstances in which earlier separation may occur). On the other hand, there is a risk that some good candidates may be lost if they cannot be assured of stable employment from the beginning; this may be true both of those who enter through a formal examination at the beginning of their working life and of those who enter relatively late in their career. For the former - and subject to the selection and examination process being sufficiently rigorous and the probationary period properly utilized - probationary appointments carrying an expectation of conversion to permanent status might continue to be used; but for most organizations there are limitations to the extent to which they can utilize entry-level juniors of this kind and they prefer the formula of an initial period of fixed-term employment which serves as a prolonged probationary period.

14. In granting permanent appointments to already-serving staff members, those who are assigned at the time to non-continuing jobs (or posts not designated as forming part of the "core") should not be excluded on that account, if otherwise eligible; thus, incumbents of project posts should not be debarred from permanent status if the organization can foresee the need to employ them indefinitely. Conversely, the fact that a staff member is at a given moment serving in a continuing (or core) post, while obviously an important consideration, should not be taken to imply that he or she is automatically eligible for a permanent appointment.

15. The nationality of a serving staff member should not be a criterion in the decision whether or not to grant permanent status; the nationality factor is taken fully into account at the time of recruitment and should not thereafter be a factor

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in the determination of the staff member's career, which should be decided solely on grounds of the organization's needs and the staff member's merits.

16. Any decision to grant a permanent appointment depends in the first place on the judgement which has to be made as to the relative importance for the organization, in achieving utmost efficiency in carrying out its programme at the present and in the future, of the stability and continuity provided by permanent staff and the flexibility and possibilities of renewal provided by fixed-term staff. In some organizations, a further choice has to be made between those who will be selected for career service on initial appointment (i.e. the system of probationary appointments as used by the United Nations) and those who will be selected for permanent appointment after serving a period of several years on fixed-term appointments. The final decision as to whether a permanent appointment should be granted to a particular staff member should be based solely on the merits and suitability of the individual in relation to the organization's needs, to the exclusion of all other considerations, as indicated in the preceding paragraphs.

Fixed-term appointments 2/

17. Fixed-term appointments are those which include an expiry date and do not carry any expectancy of renewal. They are used as initial appointments in all cases except where a probationary appointment is granted initially; they are also used, as initial or subsequent appointments, where the funding of a post or the duration of an activity is finite or uncertain in character, where the staff member does not seek permanent status, and in all other cases where it is not appropriate or not possible to grant permanent status. Fixed-term appointments thus cover those situations where the organization or the staff member, or both, do not wish to establish a permanent relationship (including the increasing proportion of cases where limited-term employment is deemed better suited to the organization's needs), as well as cases where permanent status cannot be granted, for example, because of a restriction on the proportion of permanent staff.

18. In these latter cases, it is frequent that, when the staff member wishes to continue in service and the organization wishes to retain him or her, the fixed-term appointment is renewed when it expires, once or several times, sometimes over a period of 20 or more years. The ICSC has previously remarked that "the practice of retaining employees for many years but on a temporary basis, without giving them the security of permanent status" is "an employment practice for which no parallel was to be found in national practice in either the public or the private sector" (A/33/30, para. 167); it recognized however that this practice was a consequence of "the restrictions placed by governing organs on the granting of permanent contracts" (A/31/30, para. 311). The Commission twice recommended that an "end-of-service grant" be instituted, to indemnify staff members whose fixed-term appointment was not renewed after several extensions over a considerable period of years had given them the virtual, if not the legal, expectancy that their services would continue to be required and where prolonged absence from their home country made it difficult for them to find other employment. These recommendations were turned down by the General Assembly; the administrations express the hope that the Commission will revert to the proposal at a suitable early opportunity, the need for it being greater than ever.

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19. An alternative way of avoiding the anomaly of prolonged service on a fixed-term basis without security of tenure has been suggested, namely, that those staff members to whom the organization is unable to grant permanent status should not be allowed to continue in employment beyond a fixed number of years (say, six or ten). Those organizations in particular which operate under a numerical limit on permanent appointments regard this as a counter-productive approach: it would often mean that the organization was obliged, by its own rules, to deprive itself of the valued services of a staff member whom it needed and who wished to remain, and it would probably mean that many fixed-term staff would prefer to leave after only two or three years, when their re-insertion in other employment would be easier than it would be after six or ten years but when the investment made in their recruitment and training would not have been fully amortized. The administrations consequently do not endorse this suggestion; they accept perforce the alternative, that when the number of permanent appointments permitted by legislative decision is less than the "core" of continuing staff needed for efficient operation, some of the continuing staff must serve on a succession of fixed-term appointments. Other things being equal, such staff should however have priority of consideration for permanent appointments when vacancies occur, since it is evident that the longer a staff member stays with the organization and continues to give satisfactory service, the greater his claim to the security provided by a permanent appointment.

Seconded staff

20. It is recognized that among the staff who serve with the organizations for limited periods, some will come from career employment in their country's public service or with other employers and will retain their right to return to their previous employer. The employee is placed on secondment (or leave without pay, or some similar arrangement) by the previous employer; whether the United Nations system organization should be a party to this arrangement is a matter on which there are differences of policy between the organizations. Some consider that the arrangement is a tripartite one, so that the organization must secure the agreement of the seconding Government or other employer before extending the staff member's employment or otherwise substantially modifying its conditions; some of these organizations do not consider a seconded staff member eligible for a permanent appointment. Other organizations, while welcoming the assistance of Member States in providing suitably qualified staff, consider that the contractual relationship between the organization and its employee is a bilateral one which is unaffected by other links which the staff member may have; consequently, questions relating to the staff member's career are a matter to be dealt with between the organization and the staff member, who is solely responsible for making any necessary arrangements with his previous employer. Between these two extremes, there are also intermediate practices which take into account inter alia the views of certain Member States.

21. The administrations recognize that in this area, as in some others, complete uniformity is not possible. Some organizations are bound by their regulations to recruit exclusively staff whose application are submitted through the relevant national administrations, others are free to receive direct candidatures as well as official recommendations; some draw most of their staff from administrations from

which secondment is possible, while others recruit mostly from sources of previous employment which are not prepared to grant their employees leave on secondment. The administrations suggest however that ICSC may at some future time wish to study the questions of principle which arise concerning secondment in relation to the international civil service, as well as its legal and contractual aspects and such matters as whether a special type of appointment should be used for staff on secondment in place of the standard fixed-term appointment or whether any arrangements which might be worked out with national Governments should also be extended to secondment from other types of national employment, such as universities, institutes, private enterprises, and so on.

Recruitment

22. The staff of the international civil service constitute the greater part of the resources of all the organizations (some 70 to 80 per cent of the budgets being devoted to staff costs); it is therefore essential that the methods used for recruiting the staff be such as to ensure that they meet the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity and that the persons selected are the most effective that can be found, having regard to the organization's policies and needs. This is especially important for staff who are being recruited with the expectation that they will spend a large part of their working life with the organization, including those being recruited at the entry grades for career services; but rigorous and objective procedures are no less important in selecting staff with a view to limited-term assignments.

23. The criteria of efficiency, competence and integrity must be the same whatever the nature or expected duration of the employment envisaged for the recruit; this is indispensable if the highest standards are to be maintained in a service which includes a relatively high proportion of staff serving for less than a full career. The criteria of professional aptitude applied will, however, vary: for those who, by the nature of their specialization or for other reasons, are expected to serve for a limited period, their qualifications for the post for which they are being considered and their ability to perform the functions fully from the beginning with only a minimum of adaptation will predominate; for those, on the other hand, being recruited young or who may be expected to serve for a longer period, their potential for development and their aptitude to perform work at a higher level or broader in scope than that to which they will be initially assigned may be more important than their immediate productivity. The testing may be rigorous in both cases, however, since it will not usually be decided until after several years' probationary or fixed-term employment whether the staff member will become permanent or not.

24. The administrations agree that the use of systematic methods of selection should be extended particularly in recruiting externally for junior posts. They also agree that systematic and rigorous methods of assessment, interviewing and selection should be used at all levels, with involvement in the process where possible of specialists knowledgeable of the work for which the candidate is being considered. At the same time, it should not be overlooked that written examinations and tests of knowledge, important as they are, are not the only tools of objective selection; particularly in assessing such qualities as suitability for

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work in an intercultural milieu, ability to transmit know-how and managerial ability, other means can be employed to supplement the flair of the recruiter and reduce the risk of subjectivity. Structured and systematic interviewing is one such; the participation of advisory boards or panels in the selection process is also a guarantee of objectivity.

25. The requirements of equitable geographical distribution must be met at the recruitment stage; they are in no way incompatible with the highest standards of competence and efficiency; the satisfying of both sets of criteria at the same time however, calls for additional care and effort in the process of search and selection, and the difficulty of the task increases in geometrical progression as yet further goals are superimposed.

26. The practical ability of the organizations to put into effect these improved methods - the desirability of which they have, of course, long recognized - depends on two factors. Firstly, systematic recruitment requires that needs be anticipated sufficiently in advance or reserve lists maintained from which unexpected and urgent vacancies can be filled. This is a matter of improved manpower planning and management, for which the administrations are responsible. The second requirement, however, is that more resources be available for recruitment: for wider prospection efforts, for more recruitment missions, for the organization of examinations and tests, for more and better interviewing of candidates, etc. Devoting more resources to recruitment would certainly be a sound investment in the future efficiency of the staff; but in present circumstances the organizations recognize that this is likely to be possible only by redeploying existing resources.

Career development

27. It is in the organization's interest to develop and utilize to the best advantage its human resources, just as it is in the interest of the individual to be encouraged and assisted to expand and realize his or her capabilities. Career development in this sense is not limited to staff who serve for full careers; it concerns equally those who remain with the organization for only a limited term but whose period of employment need not and should not be a static experience. Both they and the organization will benefit if they are given the opportunity to develop and possibly broaden their professional qualifications and skills, to acquire new experience and assume new responsibilities; in the case of those who return after a fixed term to national service, this career development will enhance their subsequent usefulness to their own country. In any case, since it will usually not be known until after several years whether the staff member will become permanent, systematic development of staff members' abilities and planning of their careers is a necessity from the beginning of service. Career planning and development will however naturally be more important for those who remain to serve on a long-term basis.

28. The nature and extent of the possibilities for development of a staff member's career which can and should be provided, in the mutual interest of the organization and of the employee, to staff with different expected durations of employment and occupying posts of different types depend on various circumstances, such as the permanent or ad hoc character of the organization's functions, the nature of its

operations, its size and the prospects for its expansion or contraction. While some general principles can be identified, each organization must determine the specific goals it will set out to achieve in career development and the methods it will employ, in the context of its own objectives, needs and possibilities.

29. The career progress of staff members in the Professional category who are recruited at the entry grade will in most cases naturally develop, at least up to grade P-4, within the professional group in which they are qualified. For this purpose, "professional group" must be pragmatically defined, having regard to the actual possibilities and limitations on progression and transfer within the staff of each organization. The groups are likely in some cases to be broader than those of the Common Classification of Occupational Groups (CCOG), but in others may be narrower (e.g., lawyers or economists specializing in different branches of law or economics are not as a rule interchangeable). However, transversal movements between groups should not be ruled out at any level, provided the staff member has the requisite qualifications; part - and often the major part - of the work of an international civil servant involves the facilitation of international co-operation, rather than the strict exercise of any traditional profession, and this skill can be applied in various professional fields provided the staff member masters the basics of that profession. The same is true of management. Consequently an over-rigid emphasis on the development of careers within professional "chimneys" would deprive the organization of much fruitful cross-fertilization. In any case above the level of P-4 or P-5 the professional groups which may be used as guidelines for career progression at lower levels tend to converge into broader trunks, where the specialist in one profession will find himself managing the work of specialists from neighbouring professional groups (e.g. the director of administration covering personnel, finance, general services, etc.) and so competing for promotion with colleagues from these other groups.

30. Career development supposes some degree of systematic career planning. This should aim to reconcile the staff member's ambitions and capabilities with the organization's possibilities and anticipated future needs. It should ensure:

(a) That the organization draws full benefit from the human resources and potential of its staff members and, inter alia, has at all times qualified trained staff ready to fill vacancies at higher levels.

(b) That staff members are given incentives and opportunities to develop their potential and that their increased usefulness to the organization is recognized. This recognition (apart from normal salary increments) may be in the form of horizontal movement to duties offering more challenge or better prospects, or of promotion to a higher grade with an increased level of responsibilities. In some cases the recognition of enhanced usefulness may take the form, not of promotion to a post carrying different duties (for example, when promotion possibilities of this kind are insufficient), but rather of promotion to a higher grade within the same job classification range (for example, to the higher of two linked grades, or by a personal promotion). The views of organizations regarding the use of these methods of personnel management are divided, as reported in ICSC/15/R.17/Add.2, paras. 80-82; if a common approach is to be arrived at, it will have to develop naturally through exchange of experience between organizations and cannot be imposed in the name of uniformity.

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31. The process of career planning should involve the staff member, both present and potential future supervisors and personnel management. To the extent that the development of the career follows the lines of a professional group, the advice and guidance of other specialists from this group can be beneficial. Career planning may or may not be linked with the formal performance appraisal procedures; in some cases it may lend body and purpose to otherwise rather theoretical appraisal procedures; in others it may be found preferable to keep the planning process separate from the periodic reporting procedure. One of its primary consequences should be to give staff members an understanding of what their future progress in the organization is likely to be. Another product of career planning should be jointly-agreed decisions as to what further training staff members should undertake in order to prepare themselves to compete for future assignments which have been identified as possible next steps in their careers. When such vacancies occur, a balance must be struck between the claims of qualified internal candidates, for whom the appointment would represent the fulfilment of a stage in their career plans, and qualified outside candidates, whose appointment might help to meet other personnel policy goals. The staff regulations generally assure serving staff of priority of consideration for vacancies for which they are qualified, although the modalities of implementation of this provision vary as between organizations; the existing policies and practices of many organizations would not allow them to go further in the direction of reserving particular posts in the context of career planning, for example, by excluding them from outside recruitment or by placing limits on outside recruitment at levels above the normal entry grades. However, it is clear that career planning will be facilitated in so far as outside recruitment at the normal entry grades can be encouraged, in preference to direct entry at higher levels, whenever this is appropriate.

32. In practice, the organizations are aware that the translation of generally acceptable principles into concrete career development processes is not easy in the context of changing programmes, budgetary constraints and policy directives within which the administrations must work. The medium-term plans which most organizations have do provide a framework on which a forecast of the organization's future development and staffing requirements can be based with a certain degree of probability; career development activities, to be meaningful, must be related to those plans.

33. As in the case of recruitment, the ability of the administrations to institute and implement systematic machinery for career planning depends on the availability of resources, which most organizations do not at present have for this purpose and which could be found only be redeployment of resources now devoted to other purposes. If the very considerable resources required for the time-consuming process of individual career planning cannot immediately be made available, it should still be possible for the larger organizations to envisage more systematic machinery for human resource management, and they look forward to the Commission's examination of this subject.

34. Two subjects which are of obvious importance to career development, staff training and performance appraisal, are not dealt with here, since the former is to

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be the subject of a full study by ICSC in 1983 in response to the General Assembly's request and the administrations will be presenting a complete statement of their views on it in that context; the latter, because the Commission has requested for 1984 reports from the organizations on their experience with the new procedures which the Commission recommended at its thirteenth session (A/36/30, paras. 217-226).

Conclusion

35. In this statement the executive heads have attempted to set out their common views on the areas of personnel policy which were specified in General Assembly resolutions 35/210 and 36/233, namely, concepts of career, types of appointment, career development and related questions. Where there is general agreement on a basic position this has been indicated; where there are differences in the policies and practices of the organizations the reasons for these have been given. The statement does not attempt to cover exhaustively all aspects of personnel policy; thus, apart from the two subjects mentioned in the preceding paragraph, such areas as job classification, mobility and promotion procedures have not been included. Nevertheless the organizations believe that this document should provide the International Civil Service Commission with the basis for the report it is required to submit to the General Assembly on "the broad principles for the determination of conditions of service", subject to reference being made also to a few other basic considerations which enter into the determination of conditions of service, together with the personnel policy aspects already examined.

36. The first of these is remuneration. It is not necessary to recall the bases for the determination of the remuneration of either the Professional category or the General Service and other locally-recruited categories. It is relevant to note, however, that if the principles which apply in both cases call for remuneration of higher-than-average level (the "highest-paid civil service" on the one side, "best prevailing conditions" on the other) this too follows the pattern of national civil services, with the same justification, namely that the relatively advantageous terms of remuneration help to ensure the independence of the service from improper influences, its impartiality and integrity. Seen from this angle, any disruption of the uniform pattern of remuneration in the form of supplementary payments by Governments to certain staff members or compulsory deductions by Governments from the pay of certain staff members can only risk lowering the standards of the service and is probably a greater threat than the fact that not all staff enjoy life-long security of tenure.

37. A second broad principle which is vital to the upholding of the standards of efficiency of the service is the participation of the staff in the determination of their conditions of service. While the form and extent of this participation may be a matter for discussion, the need for it is uncontested. It is consequently essential to bear in mind that conditions of service cannot satisfactorily be modified nor personnel policies developed and implemented without the involvement of the staff.

38. In conclusion, the executive heads wish to reaffirm the importance which they attach to the maintenance of the highest standards in the international civil

service. Security of tenure and full-career service were - and still are - means of ensuring impartiality, independence and efficiency; but they are not the only means and where, for valid policy or functional reasons, it is no longer possible for the staffs to be composed mainly of career officials, no effort must be spared to maintain the standards of the service through other means, for example, through objective and rigorous methods of recruitment and enlightened management. The executive heads are fully conscious of their own responsibilities in this respect; their efforts must also be supported by the legislative and governing bodies and by the Governments of Member States; and, above all, ICSC must seize the privileged opportunity which is given to it by its statute to provide guidance and leadership for the enhancement and strengthening of the international civil service.

Notes

1/ This statement deals mainly with the problems of the Professional and higher categories; the basic principles set forth are however equally applicable to the General Service and other locally-recruited categories.

2/ The United Nations uses the term "temporary" in opposition to "permanent" because it also has a category of "indefinite appointments" which have no specified expiry date but carry no expectancy of continuation until retirement and may be terminated at any time, e.g. when the need for the post no longer exists, as in activities whose mandate has to be renewed by the legislature from time to time. Other organizations, which do not have this category of indefinite appointments and would meet similar needs by fixed-term appointments, tend to reserve the term "temporary" for much shorter-term, non-regular employment, and to use "fixed-term" in opposition to "permanent".