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## JOINT INSPECTION UNIT

## PERSONNEL QUESTIONS

Report on the medium-term plan of recruitment 1983-1985:  
problems of implementationComments of the Secretary-General

1. The report of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) on the problems in implementing the medium-term plan of recruitment, 1983-1985 (A/40/673, annex) reviews a plan, developed by the Secretariat in late 1982, which has served as the guideline for recruitment activities of the Secretariat aimed at meeting targets set by the General Assembly to achieve a more equitable geographic and sex distribution. The medium-term plan is an internal management tool of the Secretariat. The goals of the plan were described to the Member States by the Secretary-General for the first time in his statement to the Fifth Committee on 15 October 1982. The outline of the plan was further elaborated in later reports of the Secretary-General (A/38/347 and Corr.1, para. 2; A/C.5/39/9, paras. 3-34) and statements of the Secretariat officials concerned (A/C.5/38/SR.41, para. 9; A/C.5/39/SR.14, paras. 30 and 31). Section II of the JIU report gives further information on the plan.

2. Based on the data presented in section III of the JIU report, the Inspectors draw the conclusion that the results obtained so far cannot be judged as satisfactory and that none of the specific goals is going to be achieved. The report singles out certain factors as particularly responsible for the non-attainment of goals and it proposes changes in both policy and recruitment methods. In the opinion of the Inspectors, equitable geographical distribution will only be achieved, from a quantitative point of view, when all Member States have the number of posts equal to the mid-points of their desirable ranges. It recommends that the existing system of desirable ranges be modified.

3. As the Inspectors noted, the data available to them at the time the report was written did not take into account changes that have taken place since then. On

the basis of the information available, they concluded in section III of their report that there had been no tangible progress registered with respect to unrepresented countries and no significant changes in the staff position of the majority of Member States remaining under-represented.

4. Information relating to the situation as at 30 June 1985 has now been presented to the General Assembly in the report of the Secretary-General (A/40/652). It shows that the number of unrepresented Member States which became represented over the period of the plan was six (Equatorial Guinea, Papua New Guinea, Saint Christopher and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Samoa and Suriname). Appointments have since been offered to nationals of two more unrepresented Member States (Djibouti and Qatar), so that by 31 December 1985, the end of the plan period, eight Member States that were not previously represented during the period should have become represented. At the beginning of the plan period there were 17 unrepresented Member States. Since then two new Member States have been admitted. Thus, there was a significant reduction of unrepresented Member States over the period of the plan from 17 to 11.

5. During the plan period, 13 under-represented Member States (Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Dominica, Israel, Ivory Coast, Norway, Oman, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Seychelles, Spain, Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and Venezuela) as well as one unrepresented Member State (Suriname) have been brought within range. This is more than 50 per cent of the 24 under-represented Member States at the beginning of the plan period. Since the plan period extends to 31 December 1985, it is expected that additional under-represented Member States may be brought within their range by that date.

6. As to the degree of under-representation referred to by the Inspectors in those Member States still not within range, the number of appointments of their nationals required as at 30 June 1985 to bring the first three Member States within range, are not as mentioned in paragraph 20 of the JIU report, but are as follows: German Democratic Republic requires 10; Germany, Federal Republic of requires 7; and Japan requires 50. These figures should be compared to the number of their nationals appointed and separated from service during the plan period: 10 nationals of the German Democratic Republic were appointed and four were separated; 45 nationals of the Federal Republic of Germany were appointed and 21 were separated; and 52 nationals of Japan have been appointed and 29 were separated. This turnover factor, which has a marked effect in such cases, must also be taken into account. Over the same period, the ranges of two of these Member States have been increased slightly as a result of changes in their assessed contribution to the budget. The range of Saudi Arabia was also raised for the same reason with the result that the lower limit of its range increased from 13 in 1982 to 18 in 1983, hence the consequent increase in the degree of under-representation of this Member State.

7. The Inspectors attribute the continuation of what they consider the unsatisfactory situation with respect to geographical distribution of posts to the United Nations recruitment practice because the percentages of nationals of unrepresented and under-represented countries appointed were too low and those of over-represented countries were too high. However, as has been reported (A/40/652), the 40 per cent target set by the General Assembly for the proportion of appointments of nationals of unrepresented and under-represented countries was

achieved and exceeded this year for the first time during the plan period, and the number of appointments of nationals from over-represented countries was brought to the limit of 10 per cent sought by the Secretary-General.

8. In section F of chapter III of the JIU report, the Inspectors attribute responsibility for what they consider the ineffectiveness of the plan. First, they call for a more active role to be played by Member States. It must be emphasized, on the one hand, that representatives of Member States have in many cases contributed in large measure to the identification of qualified candidates. On the other hand, despite numerous initiatives on the part of the Secretariat, particularly in the case of some Member States that are unrepresented, their representatives have indicated that for various reasons they are not at present in a position to assist in this respect.

9. As the Inspectors indicate, the recruitment process is complex and requires co-operation not only with Member States but also within the Secretariat between the Office of Personnel Services, which has responsibility for the implementation of the directives of the General Assembly, and the substantive departments, which are responsible for implementing the Organization's programmes and are accountable for the professional level of the output of their units. The Assembly in its resolution 39/245 of 18 December 1984, reiterated its request to the Secretary-General to strengthen the role and emphasize the authority of the Office of Personnel Services of the Department of Administration and Management in recruitment and other personnel matters throughout the Secretariat. Co-operation between the Office of Personnel Services and the substantive departments is essential and often has been very close, as was demonstrated by the success in 1985 in achieving the 40 per cent target for appointment of nationals from unrepresented and under-represented Member States and in limiting the number of appointments of nationals of over-represented Member States to 10 per cent. Internal guidelines are sent on a regular basis to departments and offices, including the secretariats of the regional commissions, with respect to the implementation of the directives of the Assembly in personnel questions.

10. The major recommendations in section IV of the JIU report relate to the system of desirable ranges and the distribution of posts. The Inspectors consider in paragraph 51 of their report that there will be no equitable geographical distribution unless the ranges are modified. The inspectors then proceed to argue that every Member State should be at the mid-point of its range, with none above and a lower limit of not more than 10 per cent below the mid-point. The Inspectors' proposal represents a complete change from the present system of ranges in that it places emphasis on an absolute upper level of representation for each Member State and permits only a minimum of deviation from a fixed point (10 per cent downwards instead of 15 per cent up or downwards). The question of the degree of flexibility appropriate for the ranges will be one of the points to be discussed next year, as well as the question of the much greater flexibility in the ranges of Member States with lower assessment rates, compared to that for Member States with higher assessment rates.

11. In his report to the General Assembly at its third session on the composition of the Secretariat and the principle of geographical distribution, the first Secretary-General of the United Nations observed:

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"Rightly understood, the cardinal principle of geographical distribution is not that nationals of a particular nation should have a specified number of posts at a particular grade or grades, or that they should receive in salary as a group a particular percentage of the total outlay in salaries, but that, in the first place, the administration should be satisfied that the Secretariat is enriched by the experience and culture which each Member nation can furnish and that each Member nation should, in its turn, be satisfied that its own culture and philosophy make a full contribution to the Secretariat." 1/

He therefore concluded that the whole problem was that of

"establishing acceptable criteria which are administratively workable. Any rigid mathematical formula to whatever yardstick it may be related, whether to national income, literacy, financial contribution to the budget of the United Nations, or any other criterion, would restrict in an impracticable fashion the flexibility on which the success of any good administration must depend, and is therefore unacceptable." 2/

The Secretary-General believes that these statements have not lost their validity. He also continues to believe that it is essential for him to administer the ranges flexibly and that this is of far greater importance to the effectiveness and efficiency of the Organization than the precise level at which the ranges of Member States may be set.

12. The Inspectors also propose that all posts at each level should be distributed by level, first between the different regions in proportion to the sum of their mid-points and then individually to the Member States in each region. This would then presumably have to be reflected later in each department and office and would introduce even more complexity since the General Assembly has accepted that the secretariat of each regional commission may be staffed by up to 75 per cent of nationals from the region. The proposed procedure would undoubtedly lead to every post at each level in every department and office being earmarked for a national of a particular Member State at predetermined levels with negative effects on career and geographical mobility. The basic inflexibility of the proposed system of ranges, compounded by a further forced distribution by level, would create immense problems in the recruitment and administration of the staff.

13. The emphasis on a specific level of representation for each Member State is not the only shortcoming of section IV of the JIU report. The Inspectors' figures with respect to the number of posts needed for every Member State to reach its mid-point are not correct. The number of posts needed for all unrepresented and under-represented Member States to reach their respective mid-points was 388 on the date of the information used by the Inspectors and not 280 as indicated in paragraph 63 of their report. For all Member States within their range but below their mid-point to reach their mid-point, a further 175 posts would have been needed on the same date, making a total of 563 posts needing to be filled to bring to their mid-point all Member States then below that point. Even this would only bring each Member State to within one post below their mid-point.

14. The figure required as at 30 June 1985 to bring all Member States just above the mid-point was 625. During the period 1 July 1984 to 30 June 1985 there were 166 appointments of nationals of Member States that were unrepresented or under-represented or within their range but below their mid-point and, during the

same period, 104 nationals of these Member States separated from service. The net gain in terms of the representation of these Member States was only 62. Assuming that this level of recruitment from such Member States continues, which is unlikely since it is higher than usual and the number of unrepresented and under-represented Member States will decrease over time, it would take 10 years for all these Member States to reach their current mid-point.

15. Apart from it being a problem to reach so specific a position for each Member State, the further problem would remain of the number of nationals of Member States that are above their desirable range, not to mention the number of nationals of Member States currently within range but already above their mid-point. Until many of these staff members separate from service, these Member States will continue for many years to be above their mid-point. Moreover, although it has been suggested in the past, the General Assembly has never accepted that there can be a complete ban on recruitment from any Member State or group of Member States. It would therefore hardly be appropriate to deny all recruitment of nationals of the 72 Member States that are above their current mid-point as the Inspectors' proposals imply.

16. The numbers of appointments required to bring all Member States to the lower limits of their ranges or to any other specific level, however, may become quite different as a result of the decisions the General Assembly may take at its forty-first session with respect to the system of desirable ranges. No account seems to have been taken by the Inspectors of the effect on the system of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) becoming a specialized agency. The staff of UNIDO in posts subject to geographical distribution as at 30 June 1985 was 347, or more than 10 per cent of all the staff in such posts. The figure of 3,350 available posts on which the current ranges are based will therefore presumably have to be changed, with consequential changes in the ranges of many, if not all, Member States.

17. Section C of chapter IV of the JIU report makes proposals first with respect to a five-year rotation of staff between Government and United Nations service and, secondly, to the ratio of staff on career and fixed-term appointments. The substance of these matters was already addressed in an earlier JIU report entitled "Application of the principle of equitable geographical distribution of the staff of the United Nations Secretariat (Addendum)" (A/37/378). The Secretary-General's comments on these matters (A/37/378/Add.1 and Corr.1, paras. 10-13) have already been submitted to the General Assembly which, in its resolution 37/235 A of 21 December 1982, has taken note of both the JIU report and the Secretary-General's comments, but did not pursue the JIU proposals. It may be noted, however, with respect to the reference in paragraph 73 of the JIU report to staff on secondment from their Government, that the proportion of seconded staff of the 70 Member States referred to rarely exceeds 5 or 10 per cent of the total, except in the case of those in Eastern Europe.

#### Recommendations I and II

18. For the reasons mentioned above, the Secretary-General considers that the recommendations, contained in the report of the Joint Inspection Unit with respect to the mid-point of each Member State's range and the publication of data by region, country and grade would not be feasible. He also disagrees with the

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conclusion of the Inspectors that the present system of ranges is the main reason for the failure of the plan or that the plan was a failure. He prefers to see the plan as a major effort toward a systematic approach to recruitment and as a primary means of creating a Secretariat in conformity with Article 101, paragraph 3, of the Charter of the United Nations. The plan has clearly produced tangible results and enabled progress to be made toward the equitable geographical distribution of the Secretariat.

Recommendations III, IV and V

19. The Secretary-General has emphasized the need for all departments and offices to co-operate and concert their efforts to implement the recruitment objectives that have been established. He has already made the Office of Personnel Services responsible for the implementation of the resolutions of the General Assembly on all personnel questions and agreed that its role should be strengthened and its authority emphasized. The Secretary-General has already accepted the general principle of seeking to achieve a measure of geographical balance within each department and office, with particular attention being given to staffing the secretariats of the regional commissions with up to 75 per cent of nationals of countries in the region. However, such a geographical balance must be approached flexibly to accommodate in a practical way the particular situation in each department, office and regional commission and their programme needs. The Secretary-General has already published information on the compliance of the departments and office with the recruitment targets set for them in the context of the recruitment plan (see A/40/652, table B).

20. In conclusion, the Secretary-General is convinced that the recruitment plan is a step in the right direction towards a more planned and co-ordinated approach to the recruitment activities of the Secretariat aimed at the objectives set by the General Assembly. The action taken within the framework of the medium-term plan of recruitment has improved the representation of many Member States in the Secretariat. The new and systematic recruitment procedures are taking firm root and are producing positive results. These results show that substantial progress can be made without detracting from the flexibility needed by the Secretary-General for the effective administration of the Secretariat in the exercise of his responsibility as chief administrative officer under Article 97 of the Charter. The Secretary-General intends to continue these recruitment efforts vigorously during the period of the next plan in order to improve both the geographic distribution of the Secretariat and the number and level of distribution of women.

Notes

1/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Third Session, Annexes, agenda item 40 (A/652), para. 7

2/ Ibid., para. 8.