

**UNOG SECURITY AND SAFETY SECTION  
MANAGEMENT LETTER**

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## I. SCOPE, OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

1. As stated in the Note entitled “Review of Management and Administration of the United Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG)” issued in 2007,<sup>1</sup> the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) included in its programme of work for 2008 a management letter on the UNOG Security and Safety Section (UNOG SSS). It covers aspects specifically relating to the management of the section with the overall objective to enhancing management practices, to increasing efficiency and effectiveness in service delivery, as well as to improving overall accountability of and within UNOG SSS.
2. In preparing this management letter, the Inspectors made use of qualitative and quantitative assessment methods based on various sources of information such as: (a) desk review of documents, (b) interviews with staff and managers of UNOG SSS, as well as with other relevant UNOG senior officials and (c) data provided by UNOG SSS and other UNOG departments in response to specific JIU requests and/or questionnaires. The Inspectors were attentive to keep the issues at a general management level rather than at individual and personal level. By doing so, the Inspectors focused on problem solving while maintaining the highest standards of confidentiality. As a matter of fact, in addition to the management issues tackled in this letter, the Inspectors have come across a series of particular problems such as operational activities conducted without a proper mandate or alleged mismanagement practices. The Inspectors intend to remain seized of the matter and reserve their right to issue a series of confidential letters.
3. Taking into account the delicate nature of certain issues, a dedicated and confidential telephone line was established to enable UNOG SSS staff members to convey their comments and suggestions (June-September 2008). A total number of 40 individuals (around 20 per cent of the workforce at that time) made use of this opportunity to share their experience and perception of the challenges and the difficulties faced by UNOG SSS, as well as their commitment to improvement. It shows that UNOG SSS staff members are keen to express their opinion on key aspects of their work as well as on issues related to the functioning of their section. The Inspectors wish to stress that perceptions collected through that channel were carefully verified against alternative sources.
4. The Inspectors wish to express their appreciation to all who assisted them in the preparation of this management letter, and particularly to those who participated in the interviews. It should be also stressed that the Inspectors faced a number of challenges to collect comprehensive, unequivocal and readily manageable information, in an appropriate format providing a corporate overview on the issues studied in this management letter. While UNOG SSS made all efforts to comply with information requests and generally provided some pieces of information, the Inspectors noted with surprise and concern that UNOG SSS is currently not collecting nor organizing in an aggregated, tabulated and manageable format several types of information such as sick leaves, training and missions’ participation, etc. A corporate perspective is a prerequisite for efficient and smooth management. UNOG SSS senior management concurred with the Inspector’s assessment and indicated that efforts are being undertaken to meet such requirements. **The Inspectors urge UNOG SSS senior management to continue to take action to develop such corporate and managerial knowledge and to keep it relevant and up to date.**
5. In 2008, the United Nations Department for Safety and Security Services (UNDSS) Internal Affairs Unit (IAU) conducted an investigation resulting from an individual complaint within UNOG SSS. **The Inspectors regret that despite their repeated official requests in application of Articles 5 and 6 of the JIU Statute, UNDSS declined to provide the final version of the investigation report.**

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<sup>1</sup> JIU/NOTE/2007/1

6. In line with the JIU statute and the practice of the Unit, this management letter has been finalized after consultation among the Inspectors so as to test its conclusions and recommendations against the collective wisdom of the Unit. The Inspectors also sought factual corrections and substantive comments on the draft management letter from UNOG SSS senior management and took them as much as objectively possible into account in finalizing the management letter. In this respect, the Inspectors wish to underscore that some issues require an urgent attention.

7. The initial review of JIU took place at a critical moment for UNOG SSS on many aspects (2005-2006). This period was even referred to in UNOG SSS internal documents as a "crisis period". The Inspectors recognize that significant changes have occurred in UNOG SSS in recent years and that efforts for improvements have been undertaken, in particular in the course of the preparation of this management letter.

8. When he came on board in October 2006, the current Chief of UNOG SSS identified a number of problems, both in operational terms (effectiveness and difficulties to meet delivery expectations, etc.) and in terms of overall functioning of the section (costs, personnel assignments, absence of performance evaluations, etc.). He therefore initiated a reform process within the section.

9. A major restructuring of the section was implemented in two phases over a period of almost two years (2007-2008). Two main axis guided the reform, namely: (a) to increase interoperability of staff with the introduction of the rotation principle for a number of tasks and consequently the abolition of a specific night team and (b) to streamline and increase the level of responsibilities of sergeants (as team leader) in particular to ensure more coherence and improved performance monitoring. **While reform efforts are acknowledged, the Inspectors regret that such reform did not address all management issues at stake such as those covered by this management letter.**

10. A new organization of work is thus in place since 2009. UNOG SSS senior management sees it as successfully implemented in terms of improved working conditions, diversification of tasks together with clarification of rights and duties, etc. The reform principles and the implementation scenarios were subject to a limited consultation with UNOG SSS staff members. As a matter of fact, both the interviews done during the Inspectors' review and the comments collected by UNOG SSS itself through a dedicated online survey conducted in February 2009 show that the comments from staff are mixed. Aside from positive feedback, a number of issues were raised such as access to training, degradation of working conditions by imposing shift hours, supervisory aspects, etc.

11. In the view of the Inspectors, while reform efforts have triggered some positive aspects within the section, there are still a number of issues that require action and corrective measures by UNOG SSS senior management. The Inspectors hope that the recommendations made in this management letter will contribute to that further improvement.

## II. INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

### A. Legal and organizational frameworks require further formalization to increase accountability

12. The creation of a single United Nations Department for Safety and Security services (UNDSS)<sup>2</sup> to address new security situation in the overall United Nations context led to integrating UNOG SSS as well as other security entities of Offices away from Headquarters (OAH) into UNDSS. As a consequence, major management prerogatives such as strategic planning and budget responsibilities and decision-making on financial and budgetary matters were transferred at a higher corporate level, with UNOG SSS managing only the day to day administration in addition to its operational activities.

13. The document entitled “Lines of reporting, responsibilities and administrative arrangements for Security and Safety Services at Office away from Headquarters and Regional Commissions”<sup>3</sup> (hereafter “Lines of reporting”) (2006), prepared under the auspices of the United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Safety and Security, sets the framework for relationships and functions among United Nations security entities. Its formal promulgation was supposed to follow the issuance of a United Nations Secretary-General Bulletin on the Department for Safety and Security services which has not been promulgated. This issue was pointed out by the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) in its report on “Comprehensive management audit of the Department of Safety and Security”.<sup>4</sup> **The Inspectors consider that it is of primary importance to place all United Nations security entities within an appropriate legal framework for action that is fully adequate to the specific functions of these entities. The Inspectors wish to draw attention to the fact that no such legal framework has been issued at this point of time.**

14. For instance, it must be pointed out that the present General Services (GS) status of most UNOG SSS staff will very likely have to be revised in the near future in view of the perception by higher management (at UNOG and elsewhere in the system) that UNOG SSS is rather a “military-like body” and not a typical United Nations “support” operation. As it has happened at Headquarters, the conditions of employment and the professional qualifications of security officers will require a standardized approach throughout the United Nations system, keeping in mind the provisions of the 1998 ILO Declaration of the Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work.

15. In addition to formal reporting to UNDSS via monthly reports to the Division of Headquarters Security and Safety Services (UNDHSS) and IMDIS requirements twice a year, UNOG SSS was requested to prepare an annual report for the year 2009. In practice, technical supervision as well as policy guidance from a remote location is not very effective. **In the view of the Inspectors, the guidance and overall monitoring from UNDHSS vis-à-vis UNOG SSS must be strengthened. There is an opportunity to increase and improve strategic support and guidance.**

16. Aside the reporting line of the UNDSS, UNOG SSS directly reports to the UNOG Director-General. However, the Inspectors noted that according to the Secretary-General’s Bulletin ST/SGB/2000/4 on the Organization of United Nations Office at Geneva, UNOG SSS activities are listed as part of the UNOG Division of Administration, therefore no longer reflecting the correct administrative status of the section. It also does not formalize UNOG SSS responsibilities vis-à-vis annex buildings and other United Nations Secretariat entities in Geneva.

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<sup>2</sup> General Assembly resolution 59/276 of 23 December 2004.

<sup>3</sup> See “Lines of reporting, responsibilities and administrative arrangements for Security and Safety Services at office away from headquarters and regional Commissions” paragraph 12g.

<sup>4</sup> A/63/379, paragraphs 11-14.

17. **The Inspectors reiterate the need to address the issue of accountability resulting from a dual reporting structure of UNOG SSS and believe that these arrangements need to be reconsidered.** In particular, the levels of delegation of authority from the Under-Secretary-General for Safety and Security to the UNOG Director-General (and subsequent reporting obligations and accountability vis-à-vis New York) as well as the status of UNOG SSS in its relation to the UNOG Director-General have to be clarified (ePAS of Chief UNOG SSS, contract renewal, etc.).

18. The level of complexity increases as the Chief UNOG SSS, as security adviser for Switzerland, France, Belgium, Monaco and other countries with United Nations presence, also reports to UNOG Director-General who is the Designated Official (DO) for security issues.

19. As of April 2010, UNOG SSS is composed of several organizational entities as pictured in Annex 2. While the Inspectors do not question the management rationales and subsequent decisions for creating specialized and dedicated units within UNOG SSS which remains a prerogative of the head of the section, they stress the necessity to have clear and unambiguous terms of reference for each UNOG SSS entities. In the view of the Inspectors, these terms of references must not be limited to basic supporting documents such as IMIS reporting requirements sheets, job descriptions of staff involved or operational procedures to be followed. Terms of reference have to clearly state the mandate, the objectives and the scope for action of each unit and have to include reporting and accountability lines. **In the Inspectors' view, this aspect has to be resolved at UNOG SSS in order to facilitate appropriate designation of responsible staff in an accountable and transparent manner.**

20. As an example, the Inspectors draw attention to the case of administrative functions. Following the implementation of the restructuring of United Nations security sector as described above, UNOG SSS created its own Administrative Unit (composed of six staff members from GS-4 to GS-7) to take care of the wide range of tasks of administrative and financial nature that are necessary to ensure smooth functioning of the section. UNOG SSS senior management also benefits from the support of two secretaries (GS) and a number of support functions are provided by other UNOG SSS staff such as IT related tasks. UNOG SSS could therefore benefit from a more formal distribution of tasks and responsibilities together with the required transparency and accountability through the adoption of appropriate terms of reference.

21. Another example is the creation of the Counter Surveillance Unit (CSU) as part of the "Groupe des Enquêtes des Operations Spéciales" (GEOS). In spite of the relatively high degree of safety and security at Geneva, the Inspectors are conscious of the increased threats against United Nations system entities and understand the importance of reinforced security measures, including risk and threat assessment. If any operational need for additional risk assessment capacity through a separate entity is required, **the Inspectors recommend carrying out these activities in the context of a clear mandate with clear operational procedures and in full compliance with Host country agreements provisions and the general rule of law**, which might be questioned on the basis of information received by the Inspectors. The Inspectors noted the high turnover of staff within this unit in recent years which might be the sign of potential internal problems. In the context of an individual complaint, the UNDSS Internal Affairs Unit scrutinized the activities of CSU through a formal investigation and made a draft recommendation insisting that the role of the Counter-Surveillance Unit at UNOG SSS be reviewed. As already mentioned, the Inspectors regret that the final version of the report was not made available to them.

**Recommendation 1: Following the implementation of General Assembly resolution 59/276 creating the United Nations Department for Safety and Security Services, the United Nations Secretary-General should issue without any further delay a Secretary-General's Bulletin (ST/SGB) for the Department of Safety and Security formalizing the legal framework of United Nations security entities.**

**Recommendation 2: The Chief of UNOG SSS should ensure that each UNOG SSS organizational entity is covered by formal terms of reference indicating its mandate, its objectives and its scope for action thereby creating a clear accountability framework.**

### III. CRITICAL MANAGEMENT ISSUES

#### A. The importance of strong leadership and integrity

22. The Inspectors recall that continuity of senior management has been a serious problem in the past. In 2005 and 2006, the high turnover and protracted vacancies had undermined the leadership within the section and negatively affected staff morale and performance due to little attention given to administrative management. Notwithstanding the appointment of the head of UNOG SSS in October 2006 that aroused a high level of expectations among staff, in a sense, the section is still suffering from the consequences of this previous episode.

23. The management role of UNOG SSS Chief is indeed crucial. As stated in the “Lines of reporting”, he/she is responsible (a) to direct and manage the UNOG SSS which means among other things to ensure adherence of UNOG SSS staff to United Nations core values and compliance with United Nations administrative rules and procedures, (b) to ensure personnel management in accordance with applicable professional standards for security personnel, (c) to develop a long-term policy for recruitment and retention of qualified security personnel and procedures for screening, and evaluating new candidates, and identify new recruitment sources and (d) to develop and implement UNOG SSS training programmes.<sup>5</sup> The Inspectors consider this position as extremely challenging to perform as it supposes the combination of a wide range of skills and competencies as the functions of chief commander and senior managers suppose indeed different types of competencies and aptitudes.

24. In terms of managerial capacity, UNOG SSS functions with only three permanent professionals complemented by two temporary professional staff to manage and command a section composed of more than 200 staff members (mostly security officers), in the context of a 24/7 operational responsibilities in Geneva but also in numerous engagements abroad. **In the view of the Inspectors, this structure does not provide sufficient managerial capacity.** At this point in time, UNOG SSS requests for additional professional posts via the appropriate United Nations budget processes have not been approved. The middle managerial level of general services supervisors also requires improvement, in particular with regards their capacities as team leader.

25. The Inspectors received convergent comments from staff at various hierarchical levels on the existence of “influence groups” coexisting within UNOG SSS in recent years. While they recognize the human and normal tendency of staff members to gather into informal and/or friendly groups depending on their linguistic, cultural and professional background, **the Inspectors urge senior management to be proactive to impede the resurgence of such type of predominant groups to influence the decision-making process entailing a risk to lead to discrimination vis-à-vis staff members not belonging to or not participating in such groups.** It is of primary importance as these situations may also affect the organizational effectiveness and, ultimately, the delivery of services against corporate requirements.

26. Some interviewees were concerned by the excessive delegation of power given to “key players” within the section. The Inspectors noted with concern that some staff members were questioning whether or not the Chief UNOG SSS was assuming his full authority and responsibility for a number of executive management decisions such as recruitment and promotions, designation and mission assignments. UNOG SSS senior manager denied such allegations and manifested that he was assuming his duties in full compliance with United Nations rules and regulations on the matter.

27. Alleged harassment and personal threats that took place in the “night team” for which no disciplinary measures were taken (as a matter of fact, it seems that the official complaint and request for investigation of misconduct was never “handed over” to HRMS) which is perceived by staff as a “laissez faire” policy in connection with UNOG SSS affairs.

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<sup>5</sup> “Lines of reporting”, paragraph 12g.



28. In the context of the investigation conducted in August/September 2008, UNDSS internal investigation unit included a critical draft recommendation concerning the UNOG SSS senior management for failing to take appropriate measures to address concerns of disharmony in the CSU and for failure to take action regarding inappropriate pictures on UNOG SSS computers. Despite their request, the Inspectors were not provided with the final investigation report, if ever issued.

#### **B. Management practices induce a risk to lower staff moral**

29. In preparing this management letter, the Inspectors noted staff preoccupations referring to the management style of UNOG SSS managers that negatively affect staff moral. They were alerted on alleged problematic management practices, including on the part of the Chief of the section. Negative comments or remarks were formulated such as lack of communication on reasons supporting a decision, therefore not providing sufficient understanding of its rationale; non-transparent decisions processes therefore generating frustrations and ground for rumors' spreading; absence of appropriate decision making when circumstances would require therefore creating uncertainty regarding management; selectivity and double standards managerial approach; absence of follow-up to previous decisions; lack of accountability; cases of impunity; retaliation decisions, etc. UNOG SSS senior management expressed grave concerns about these allegations and requested more detailed information supporting these cases in order to be able to provide adequate answers.

30. The interviews conducted over a significant period of time highlighted a clear malaise within a non negligible proportion of UNOG SSS staff, mostly security officers. Generally speaking, the Inspectors found the team spirit within the section as rather low compared to the tasks and the challenges to be faced. In some instances, the Inspectors perceived jealousy among staff. In the opinion of the Inspectors, the malaise has various origins and sources, founded both on acts but also on individuals' perceptions.

31. The Inspectors also received from security officers several allegations of specific retaliation measures or harassment practices from UNOG SSS senior management against them: downgrading in grade, posting to position at annexes rather than within the Palais des Nations, re-affectation to guard platoon, placement against extra-budgetary posts, etc. The Inspectors are preoccupied by the fact that a number of these persons actively contributed to previous or current JIU reviews.

32. The Inspectors consider the amount of sick leave days as potentially indicative of this malaise. In 2008, the total amount of missed working days reached 1791.5 (2114.5) (more than doubled compared to 2007), representing an average of 8.07 (10.5) day per UNOG SSS staff.<sup>6</sup> The Inspectors note that these figures are above in absolute and in average terms compared to other UNOG departments. In addition, the Inspectors noted that the cumulative uncertified sick leave days is also progressing from 504 (2007) to 659 (2008). The number of staff under sick leave for more than 20 working days in a calendar year has also almost doubled from 13 in 2007 to 24 in 2008. While there are certainly objective reasons due to risks inherent to the tasks accomplished by security officers and some long term absences, the fact remains that this situation is of nature of impairing UNOG SSS performance as a whole and poses a permanent challenge in terms of planning and business continuity. In that context, the Inspectors were surprised by the inability of UNOG SSS to provide a corporate perspective of the sick leave situation within the section in order to complement the compilation of individual records. UNOG SSS also informed the Inspectors about its readiness to undertake an evaluation of the sick leave situation within the section.

33. The Inspectors have received and compiled a considerable number of allegations of a problematic nature which in their view should be carefully and systematically scrutinized, on a case by case basis. UNOG SSS senior managers have indicated their willingness to

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<sup>6</sup> UNOG Medical Service data does not match with JIU counting based on data transmitted by UNOG SSS.

contribute to such review. Therefore, the Inspectors intend to transmit relevant information to the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) for further verification/investigation and proper action. **The Inspectors urge UNOG SSS staff members to seize this opportunity of such external comprehensive review exercise and invite them to officially raise their concerns and complaints.**

**Recommendation 3: The Office of Internal Oversight Services is requested to conduct as soon as possible an investigation process of the management practices within UNOG SSS, based in particular on the cases identified and documented by the Joint Inspection Unit.<sup>7</sup>**

### **C. Staff-management relations need to be dramatically improved**

34. Conscious of the specific working environment and of the constraints in which UNOG SSS operates as well as the principle of hierarchical functioning and the necessary respect of the command chain, **the Inspectors wish to draw attention to the necessity to have satisfactory staff-management relations based on transparency, fairness and mutual trust to ensure effective functioning of the section.**

35. Communication in this regard appears as a key managerial competency. After numerous interviews, there is no doubt in the Inspectors' mind that senior management communication is perceived as weak when they address (or abstain to address) staff's preoccupations. Some staff often expressed a feeling of absence of encouragement to open discussion at the work place. Formal communication mechanisms currently in place within UNOG SSS were described as the following: daily meeting on the spot, bi-weekly supervisory meetings, specialized meetings and monthly town hall staff meetings. UNOG SSS senior management indicated that measures had been taken already to create open discussions and have information sharing mechanisms in place but remains attentive to other options to continue to improve communication within the section.

36. The Inspectors made an analysis of the minutes of the monthly staff town hall meetings. While the discussions indeed have an informative character, the Inspectors noted that the meetings are often limited to formal communications made by senior management and/or chiefs of units. The Inspectors were informed that the level of attendance of such meetings was rather low but recognize that they are objective reasons for some staff not to attend (duty requirements, night shift, mission assignments, etc.).

37. **The Inspectors request the head of UNOG SSS to make better use of the monthly staff meeting to both enable staff members to feel free to express their views and concerns on the one hand and management to better respond to questions rose on the other hand. More generally, the Inspectors reiterate the strong need for UNOG SSS senior management to clearly communicate decisions and actions taken in order to prevent misunderstanding and rumors.** In this respect, any processes and action should be duly written and recorded accordingly. To the extent possible, verbal instructions should be avoided to transmit key managerial decisions and formal and written communications means should be observed.

38. The Inspectors also reviewed the minutes of the supervisory meetings held on a bi-weekly basis. While operational aspects take predominance, in the Inspectors' opinion, these meetings should be a forum for more strategic discussion on management issues.

39. UNOG SSS is one of the few UNOG entities to have an internal departmental staff representation through the election of UNOG SSS staff representatives (sectoral assembly). **The Inspectors stress that the role and the responsibilities of staff representatives must**

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<sup>7</sup> If not undertaken by OIOS, the Inspectors would consider other alternatives to carry out such an investigation.

**be properly recognized, respected and protected by senior management.** UNOG SSS senior management stated that regular and respectful contacts with the staff representatives are the rule within UNOG SSS and that their roles are fully respected by management. In general, **the Inspectors are of the opinion that conflict resolutions need to be properly addressed within the section.**

40. The Inspectors were apprised that several personal conflicts at the work place arose in the past. As mentioned, at least one of them evolved into an investigation conducted by UNDSS Internal Affairs Unit in 2008.

#### **D. Human resources area perceived as highly problematic**

41. Since 2007, human resources management activities have significantly absorbed UNOG SSS administrative capacity, in majority through dozens of external recruitments (mostly at GS-2 or GS-3 entry levels) but also through nine reclassification processes of positions to higher levels and more than 40 promotions. This intense activity resulted from certain inaction in previous years and was necessary to address operational difficulties.

42. The Inspectors gathered a significant amount of dissatisfaction remarks and complaints, pointing out to wrong management practices in the area of human resources management such as (a) tailor-made vacancy announcement, (b) absence of respect of required procedure such as absence of interviews of suitable candidates, (c) disrespect of vacancy announcement requirements such as language skills or basic security certification, (d) recruitment in the absence of vacancy announcement, (e) favoritism leading to accelerated career path at the expense of other colleagues, (f) special consideration to a group of candidates coming from the same geographical origin, etc. When informed about such critical remarks, UNOG SSS senior management strongly questioned their truthfulness and reaffirmed its commitment/readiness to examine specific cases brought to its attention by the Unit.

43. Conscious of the extreme sensitivity of these issues and because they involve individual cases, the Inspectors made all efforts to verify allegations against the facts by collecting and verifying data. Despite numerous demands to UNOG SSS and UNOG HRMS, the Inspectors were not provided with a comprehensive set of data offering a sufficient level of confidence in the analysis and therefore recommend that the Office of Internal Oversight Services closely scrutinize all human resources processes within in the Section.

**Recommendation 4: The Office of Internal Oversight Services is requested to conduct at the earliest opportunity a comprehensive inspection of human resources practices within the UNOG SSS.**

#### **E. Controversial recourse to external psychologist**

44. In line with requirements for security officers within the United Nations, UNOG SSS staff members are subject to physical and psychological tests. In that matter, the Inspectors recall that the Annual Chief Meeting of security entities (ACM) debated in 2007 on the issue whether or not psychological testing should be conducted periodically or only as part the initial recruitment phase. Since 2008, 49 such assessments were conducted, including four staff debriefed upon return from peace-keeping mission assignment. For that purpose, UNOG SSS recurses to an external practitioner specialized in conducting the assessment of security guards' aptitude to carry arms in their duties. According to the information received by the Inspectors, the psychologist is recruited as a consultant by UNOG SSS with no involvement of the United Nations Medical Services Section.

45. In a number of cases, the recourse to the external psychologist presented some serious problems. The Inspectors received evidence that the psychologist was asked in 2009 to meet with, at least, four UNOG SSS security officers outside of the scope of action as defined by

its terms of reference (aptitude to weapons carrying). In three of these cases, the meeting had been initiated without prior information or authorization of the UNOG Medical Services Section but directly at the level of UNOG SSS senior management which is a clear violation of established procedures. **The Inspectors are extremely preoccupied by such management practice. The attitude and absence of action from the UNOG Medical Service is also questioned by the Inspectors in that matter.**

46. The reporting modalities of the psychologist raise some fundamental issues as well. The Inspectors read with surprise that the TOR for the psychologist intervention includes a provision for a debriefing session not only with the Medical Service but also with UNOG SSS Chief. The Inspectors were informed that in practice a written evaluation report is provided to the Medical Service as well as to the staff member concerned and that UNOG SSS senior management is present during oral debriefings of the psychologist to the United Nations doctor. While the Inspectors understand that the assessment report contains a documented recommendation, they are convinced that fundamental human rights issues such as personal data protection, confidentiality of medical information and respect of labor rights at the work place<sup>8</sup> and privacy should be fully respected in all circumstances. In one case, at least, the Inspectors were stunned to learn that sensitive relevant information was circulated to several heads of UNOG departments. Moreover, legal norms in force both in Switzerland and in nearby France must be guaranteed at all times.

47. While the Inspectors understand the importance for the Chief UNOG SSS to receive professional advice to support his decision regarding the aptitude of security officers to carry a weapon in their duties, **the Inspectors urge the authorities concerned to clarify a number of aspects**, namely: (a) the selection and procedure for hiring a psychologist as consultant by UNOG SSS without going through the Medical Services Section, (b) the criteria and the practice to choose the officers to be assessed by the psychologist, (c) the respect of the confidentiality of health-related records. UNOG SSS denied that the practice could be used as a retaliation measure and stressed the need for the Chief to be in a position to properly assess the suitability of his personnel to carry a side arm, in light of his responsibility. UNOG SSS also reaffirmed that this information was treated in a confidential manner.

48. This raises a fundamental issue whether or not any United Nations entity (Division, Department, Section, etc.) is legally authorized to recruit a practitioner, in this case a psychologist, on its own bypassing the institutionalized medical service.

49. **The Inspectors strongly advise OIOS to include this management practice in the comprehensive process of investigation recommended above (Recommendation 3 above).**

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<sup>8</sup> See The 1998 ILO Declaration of the Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work.

## IV. THE WAY FORWARD

### A. A comprehensive recruitment strategy is needed

50. The professional background of security officers must be highly specialized in security-related occupations (police, fire departments, army, etc.). A number of them have many years of experience in active national security service implying working under pressure and risky conditions. The Inspectors emphasize the difference in nature of activities of this type of profile compared to daily routine activities as often performed in the Palais des Nations. This may translate into a lack of motivation and frustration arising among staff when confronted with repeating tasks and less active duties. The passage from a strictly national law enforcement agency or institution to an international multilateral organization and its bureaucracy represents a challenge not to be underestimated, including at senior management level. As a matter of fact, the Inspectors were told that a number of security officers resigned from the United Nations to go back to a more active service or left UNOG SSS for field assignments.

51. The Inspectors wish to stress that given the cosmopolitan character of the organization, as for other positions in contact with the diplomatic community or the general public, effective linguistic skills, in particular in English are among necessary skills required for security officers.

52. **The Inspectors urge the Chief of UNOG SSS to develop a comprehensive recruitment strategy** composed of the following elements: (a) a review of recruitment criteria to better focus on relevant skills and competencies, including necessary linguistic skills, to align them with the various and diversified daily operational requirements and (b) at the recruitment process, a clear information to candidates on the routine aspects potentially characterizing certain positions. UNOG SSS should also develop an induction programme for newly recruited staff at Geneva insisting on characteristics and differences in assignments that would complement existing programmes.

**Recommendation 5: The Chief of UNOG SSS should urgently develop a comprehensive recruitment strategy to ensure the adequacy of skills and competencies of security officers to the various and diversified types of operational requirements.**

### B. Recruitment processes require more oversight

53. According to the existing United Nations rules, it is the responsibility of the programme manager to evaluate candidates, make recommendations and select staff in a promotion exercise. Human resources management entities oversee the process and central review bodies intervene only at certain levels (above GS-4). Concerning security entities, the “Lines of reporting” confirms that local staff is recruited under the overall supervision of the Chief UNOG SSS in collaboration with Division of Administration as required.<sup>9</sup> **In the Inspectors’ views, the instructions to ensure that common minimum standards are adhered to for local recruitment should be promulgated.**<sup>10</sup>

54. Noting that UNOG SSS receives the same level of corporate oversight as other UNOG entities, the Inspectors draw attention to the peculiarity of UNOG SSS in this regard: de facto, given the grade distribution within the section, UNOG SSS senior managers exercise this autonomy of recruitment for as much as 74 per cent of the section work force. HRMS is not represented in most of the recruitment and promotion panels at UNOG SSS. The Inspectors consider this situation particularly risky in terms of accountability, transparency and

<sup>9</sup> Lines of reporting, paragraph 18c.

<sup>10</sup> Lines of reporting, paragraph 18.

efficiency of recruitment and have included Recommendation 7 despite the comment from UNOG SSS stating that “it was already implemented”. On the same basis, the Inspectors wish to stress the language and the specific mandate of the United Nations Charter (article 101.3) stressing the need for meeting the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity as well as the importance of a wide geographical basis of the recruitment.

55. While at the time of the issuance of the administrative instruction concerning the staff selection system recently revised (ST/AI/2006/3, revised in 2010), it had been planned to prepare a separate administrative instruction for the recruitment and promotion of staff up to GS-4, S-2 and TC-3 levels,<sup>11</sup> such instruction was never issued. Current system provides provisions for review bodies only starting at GS-5 level. On this subject, the Inspectors were informed that HRMS is currently engaged in developing a system of review bodies also for GS-3 and GS-4 positions, as well as for initial recruitment at GS-2 and GS-3. This initiative is limited to Geneva duty station. It is expected that the envisioned system would introduce more transparency and control for recruitment or promotion at lower grade levels.

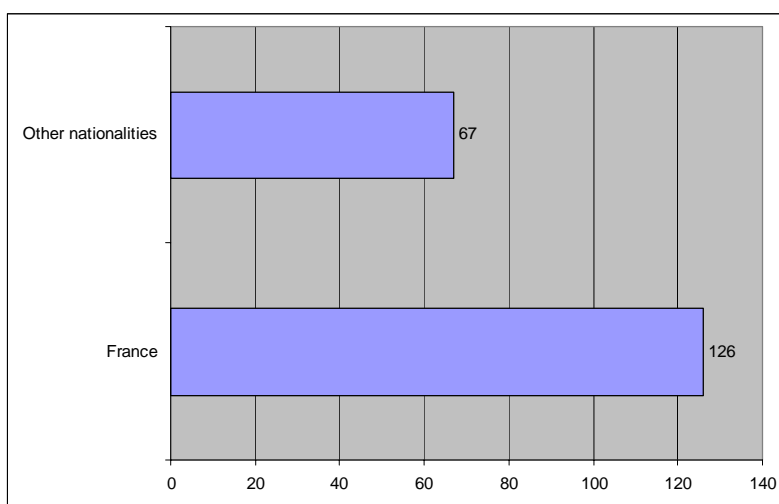
**Recommendation 6: The United Nations Secretary-General should promulgate as soon as possible an administrative instruction (ST/AI) on the recruitment and promotion of staff up to the GS-4, S-2 and TC-3 levels.**

**Recommendation 7: Until an administrative instruction (ST/AI/) on the recruitment and promotion of staff up to the GS-4, S-2 and TC-3 levels is promulgated, the UNOG Human Resources Management Section should take appropriate measures to ensure oversight on recruitment and promotion processes within UNOG SSS.**

**C. The diversity of the workforce should be significantly broadened**

56. As of July 2009, the profile of UNOG SSS workforce is described in Annex 1. The Inspectors focused their attention on the issue of diversity within UNOG SSS as represented in Figure 1 below.

**Figure 1: Staff diversity within UNOG SSS as of July 2009**



Other nationalities includes: Congo, Russia, Uganda, Togo, Sri Lanka, Serbia, The Netherlands, Kenya, Israel, Eritrea, Central African Republic, Belgium and Australia (one staff member); UK, Spain, Portugal, Croatia, Philippines, Mauritius, Ivory Coast, Ghana, China, Chile, Brazil and Algeria (two); Canada (three); Tunisia, Peru and Italia (four); USA (six) and Switzerland (eight).

Source: ST/ADM/R.64

<sup>11</sup> See ST/AI/2006/3, footnote 11 and ST/AI/200673/Rev.1.

57. In the 2007 JIU Note, the Inspectors pointed out the issue of diversity at the United Nations Office at Geneva in the following terms: “With respect to General Service staff, it should be recalled that although this category of staff should be locally recruited (see staff rule 104.6), it does not necessarily mean that the recruitment process should only consider candidates living in the immediate vicinity. In this regard, the Inspectors noted that about 40 per cent of the General Service staff is of one nationality. This percentage is notably higher in UNOG SSS. While it might be expected that a significant number of General Service staff are *frontaliers*, given the proximity of Geneva to France and while these positions are not subject to the principle of equitable geographical distribution, UNOG should undertake efforts to give equal chances to candidates from other countries to be considered and selected for these posts, particularly with regard to appointments and promotions within UNOG SSS. In this regard, host authorities should provide temporary entry facilities for candidates holding an official communication inviting them for an interview at UNOG. At the same time, UNOG should undertake efforts to facilitate the use of videoconferencing for interviewing candidates.”<sup>12</sup> This statement remains valid in 2010. **The Inspectors request UNOG administration to take appropriate measures to make these provisions operational.**

58. The Inspectors stress the persisting prevailing concentration of one nationality in UNOG SSS staffing. Indeed, **the Inspectors are deeply disappointed that despite the JIU recommendation made in 2007 the situation has deteriorated: 65 per cent of UNOG SSS staff are French nationals as of July 2009 in comparison to 58 per cent in July 2006.**<sup>13</sup> One objective reason is related to the fact that United Nations salaries are more attractive on the French labor market compared to the Swiss market. Geneva can not be fully compared with other duty stations due to its pronounced cosmopolite character. **It is the Inspectors’ opinion that efforts should be made to develop better balancing of geographical origins within the section**, in particular by taking appropriate measures to facilitate recruitment (on local basis with local entitlements) of a larger geographical origin, including of people not already settled in the region as described above. By comparison, in Vienna, Austrian officers represent only 32 per cent among security staffing (as of July 2009). In the view of the Inspectors, there are alternative measures that could be taken such as to explore the pool of potential candidates from field operations.

59. UNOG SSS is well aware of the imbalance of nationalities within its working force and reaffirmed its willingness to broaden it to the extent possible. UNOG SSS has sought support from HRMS to identify innovative recruitment strategies to broaden the candidates’ diversity. In particular, recruitment of staff from other United Nations duty stations has been processed in the recent past. But these efforts have not produced significant results yet, as stated above and that is why the Inspectors have included Recommendation 8 in spite of the comment from UNOG SSS stating that “a number of proactive and innovative measures have already been taken to attract candidates from a greater number of nationalities”.

60. The Inspectors also want to underline that currently all four GS-7 positions are held by French nationals (three security officers and one administrative staff) as shown in Annex 1, Figure 2.

61. The Inspectors are also preoccupied by repeated comments on the fact that security officers were recruited through same channels within similar operational professional background and in the same geographical region of France. In the same vein, the Inspectors do not consider as appropriate for the Chief UNOG SSS to make public announcement during a monthly staff meeting requesting all UNOG SSS colleagues to help in the recruitment of temporary personnel at GS-2 level.

62. The Inspectors wanted to assess the diversity of professional backgrounds and geographical origins of security officers at the time of recruitment but in spite of several requests made to UNOG SSS and HRMS, the Inspectors regrettably were not provided with a comprehensive and unequivocal set of data on this aspect to validate or invalidate allegations

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<sup>12</sup> JIU/NOTE/2007/1, paragraph 37.

<sup>13</sup> Sources: ST/ADM/R.64 and ST/ADM/R.60.

of potential problems in recruitment. It should be carefully scrutinized by the OIOS inspection (Recommendation 4 above). Nevertheless, the Inspectors wish to stress once more that the prevalence of staff coming from a specific sector of one country is not reconcilable with the international nature and universal mandate of the United Nations.

**Recommendation 8: The Chief of UNOG Human Resources Management Section should urgently take appropriate measures to ensure proactive and innovative advertisement of vacant positions at UNOG SSS, in order to attract more candidates from a wider range of nationalities. In the same vein, UNOG SSS senior management is urged to increase the diversity of new recruits, for example by refraining to the extent possible from recruiting candidates from already largely represented nationalities.**

#### **D. Measures to address criticism regarding career management**

63. As in many United Nations offices or departments, the Inspectors are aware that some dissatisfaction may appear among non-selected candidates during promotion exercises. During interviews, the Inspectors understood that career management issues are perceived by a good number of UNOG SSS staff members as non-transparent and not fair. The Inspectors wish to stress that the management style and in particular the communication style may exacerbate or moderate tensions in this regard. The Inspectors urge UNOG SSS senior managers to ensure proper communication, awareness and understanding of the United Nations rules and procedures among staff members of the section in order to avoid, as much as possible, such misunderstandings or rumors spreading. At the same time, the Inspectors also encourage UNOG SSS staff to make all efforts to better mastermind rules of the staff selection system to avoid unfounded dissatisfaction or misinterpretation. The Inspectors also stress the need for the Chief UNOG SSS to clearly and transparently communicate to staff about promotion opportunities and define transparent criteria to assess candidates and to duly record the rating of candidates.

64. The Inspectors reaffirm that promotion should be based on comparative evaluation of candidates' profiles and performances, with a view to identify and select the best candidate for an identified position. The fact that minimum requirements in terms of qualifications experience, language, etc. are met is a prerequisite that constitutes only the basis for a comparative screening and evaluation in which each aspect has to be weighted. In particular, past performance as assessed through individual performance appraisal system (ePAS) must to be a central element which can be achieved only if there is mutual commitment from staff and managers to use the appraisal system as a management tool and not only as a bureaucratic exercise. Seniority by itself is not a sufficient criterion for career development but the Inspectors welcome the initiative of HRMS to look into the situation of long-term service staff members at lower grade level not being promoted to higher grades. **The Inspectors remind that full transparency should be applied by communicating to staff the reasons of such absence of career progression and urge both managers and staff to identify and implement measures to increase career opportunities.**

65. To complement mandatory entry-testing (at GS-2 and GS-3 developed by UNDSS and managed by SDLS) UNOG SSS developed, with reference to ST/AI/2006/3/Rev.1, a system of internal testing to streamline promotion exercises starting at GS-4 level, notably with the view to limit to a reasonable amount the number of candidates interviewed. Technical profile of candidates is thus assessed through four basic and technical questions related to security officer's activities. The test also includes a limited language appraisal. At GS-5 and GS-6 grades, it also comprises problems solving and supervisory aptitudes assessment. While they understand the stated objective, the Inspectors stress that, given the perceived favoritism of recruitment process among some staff; such testing cannot be used as filter, but only as one element of the comparative process and therefore cannot be eliminatory as such.



66. While the Inspectors recognize the need for UNOG SSS to ensure the highest adequate level of expertise against corporate requirements, **they recommend that UNOG SSS senior management should develop internal capacity to train staff to acquire the necessary level of expertise in specialized area to be considered as suitable candidate for GS-6 and above positions.** In the Inspectors' opinion, this would contribute to the diversification of competencies and skills among UNOG SSS workforce and be favorable for internal mobility.

67. Some staff members expressed concerns about several accelerated promotion/career path within the section and about the absence of compliance with vacancy announcement requirements on security (arms related) or language (English) requirements and management experience. Given the restrictions concerning data available as already mentioned, the Inspectors believe that these issues should be part of the comprehensive review of human resources practices as recommended above (Recommendation 4).

#### **E. Towards a more strategic and transparent management of training**

68. Training and re-training of security officers of all categories and at all grades is a requirement to ensure professional effectiveness in a constantly changing security environment (nature of threats, technological evolution, specialization of functions, etc.). The Inspectors thus welcome that, under the auspices of its Training Unit, UNOG SSS provides internal opportunities or make external arrangements for specialized courses such as weapons shooting tests, close protection, explosive and ammunition scanning, car searching techniques, first aid, etc. The Inspectors welcome as a positive development the current efforts to equip the section with an assistant to the chief at professional level, but on temporary basis, in charge of training matters, in particular for policy orientation and standardization of programmes in a United Nations system perspective. It is also noted that the Under-Secretary-General for Safety and Security requested UNOG SSS to play a leading role in establishing training norms for security officers at Offices Away from Headquarters and Tribunals. A task that UNOG SSS envisages to complete before the end of 2011.

69. The Inspectors recommend UNOG SSS Training Unit to conduct a formal Training Needs Assessment (TNA) with a view to capture individual and collective skills and competencies (educational background, professional experience, language coverage, training records, etc.). **In the opinion of the Inspectors, the TNA could then serve as the basis of a comprehensive corporate training and development plan comprising specific goals, targets and performance indicators. The plan should not only focus on specialized security aspects but also on United Nations core values and competencies as well as on languages skills.** The TNA should serve as a roadmap to ensure that all officers and managers are trained on a regular basis. The TNA should also contribute to highlight individual areas of improvement to be included in the personal development plan of the appraisal system (ePAS) of each staff member. Information collected through the TNA should provide substantive basis to enhance designation process for mission designation.

70. UNOG SSS informed the Inspectors that individual training records are kept in a dedicated database. However, the Inspectors regret the absence of readily information concerning the total amount of training days attended by each staff on a yearly basis. UNOG SSS was not in a position to comply with the request to provide manageable disaggregated data by staff in terms of participation in trainings and their location. **In the Inspectors' view, it is another shortfall in terms of proactive management that made it delicate for the Inspectors to crosscheck allegations of favoritism or discrimination regarding granting access to training.**

71. At UNOG SSS, the issue of equal access to training is indeed particularly at stake. In principle, planning includes one week of training every 11 weeks but it seems too ambitious with regards operational requirements and is not implemented. Generally speaking, UNOG SSS staff members do not have easy access to training events due to stretched operational services requirements implying constant planning readjustment and reprioritization, in particular for security officers of the platoon guard. **The Inspectors believe that UNOG SSS**

**senior management should take all necessary measures to align its practice with the United Nations Learning and Development Policy recommending a minimum of five days for professional development per year for all staff members.**<sup>14</sup>

72. These constraints particularly affect the participation in language courses offered by the Staff Development and Learning Section (SDLS). While it was expected that the rotational work organization would enable more security officers to enroll, the Inspectors noted that the number of enrollments dropped in 2010 from 2007. Conscious of the importance of linguistic skills for positions with direct contact with the public, UNOG SSS launched some efforts in 2006, together with the SDLS, to enhance linguistic skills of the security officers but these were not durable due to high costs implications for UNOG SSS. **The Inspectors also wish to stress staff own responsibility to increase their linguistic skills and encourage them to explore other opportunities such as self-directed courses or on-line courses.**

73. Access to training events is not only of great importance to ensure the most efficient and trained security officers. It has also a decisive link with career management and career development as it is evident that certifications are an important element for promotion. In this context, and given some allegations of favoritism in training designation, **the Inspectors are of the view that UNOG SSS senior management should determine specific criteria for training enrollment based on the TNA and the corporate training plan and should ensure the highest standards of transparency in applying these criteria.**

74. The Inspectors learned with surprise that in the past some UNOG SSS staff members organized independently self-training or covered the financial implications at their own expenses to enroll in external training, allegedly because of the lack of internal training opportunities.

75. The Inspectors were told that preferred treatment was granted to some staff members in terms of access to external training opportunities. Again, in the absence of clear aggregated data it is difficult for the Inspectors to take a firm position on that subject. Nevertheless, taking into account the UNOG SSS budget situation and the opportunities provided by the Swiss Police for a wide range of training free of charge, the Inspectors urge UNOG SSS senior management to refrain from engaging staff to external training and use internal and local capacities. If training events have to take place abroad for justified reasons, UNOG SSS senior management should be attentive to ensure balancing in individual participation and keep transparent records.

**Recommendation 9: The UNOG SSS Chief should conduct a complete training needs assessment for the staff of the Section and build a comprehensive training plan no later than the end of 2011 with the view to ensuring regular, equitable and balanced access to relevant professional training.**

#### **F. Towards an effective and transparent management for missions assignments**

76. As one of the major security entity of the United Nations system, UNOG SSS is often called to participate in a wide range of external security missions such as providing security coverage during international conferences or United Nations meetings. Other activities include conducting technical security assessments and providing security advises. Security officers may also participate in peacekeeping operations or provide close protection services of United Nations officials in the field. These activities are often undertaken under difficult circumstances. The large recourse to UNOG security officers show that their professionalism and their commitment are appreciated in the United Nations community. However, the impact on UNOG SSS business capacity and continuity is severe as security officers on official missions have to be replaced therefore imposing strong planning constraints.

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<sup>14</sup> ST/SGB/2009/9, paragraph 2.2

77. Individual participation to missions is recorded. However, the Inspectors regret the absence of information concerning the total number of days of mission undertaken by its staff on a yearly basis. UNOG SSS did not comply with the request to provide clear disaggregated data by staff in terms of participation in missions, their type and their location. In some instances, data provided is problematic and potentially unreliable. The Inspectors consider this as another shortfall in terms of proactive management. The Inspectors therefore could not assess the distribution and the location of such missions among staff.

78. The Inspectors understand that aside the professional experience gained, the possibility of joining a mission has a strong motivational impact on security officers. In this area, a number of interviewees expressed their dissatisfaction and were convinced that the designation process was not meeting sufficient standards of transparency and that the process was not providing equal opportunities or equitable granting of assignments, in particular when the mission takes place abroad. UNOG SSS senior management is aware of these complaints. **The Inspectors are of the view that decision regarding future missions assignments should be clearly communicated and shared early with candidates.**

79. In an attempt to solve this recurring problem, UNOG SSS developed in 2008 a database to manage and screen candidates for assignments to conference coverage. It was made accessible to UNOG SSS staff members through the section's intranet. The Inspectors welcome this initiative but consider that the current system is not yet an efficient management and decision-making tool. **The Inspectors strongly recommend that the database coverage be expanded to all types of missions undertaken by UNOG SSS and not be limited to conferences only as it is currently the case.**

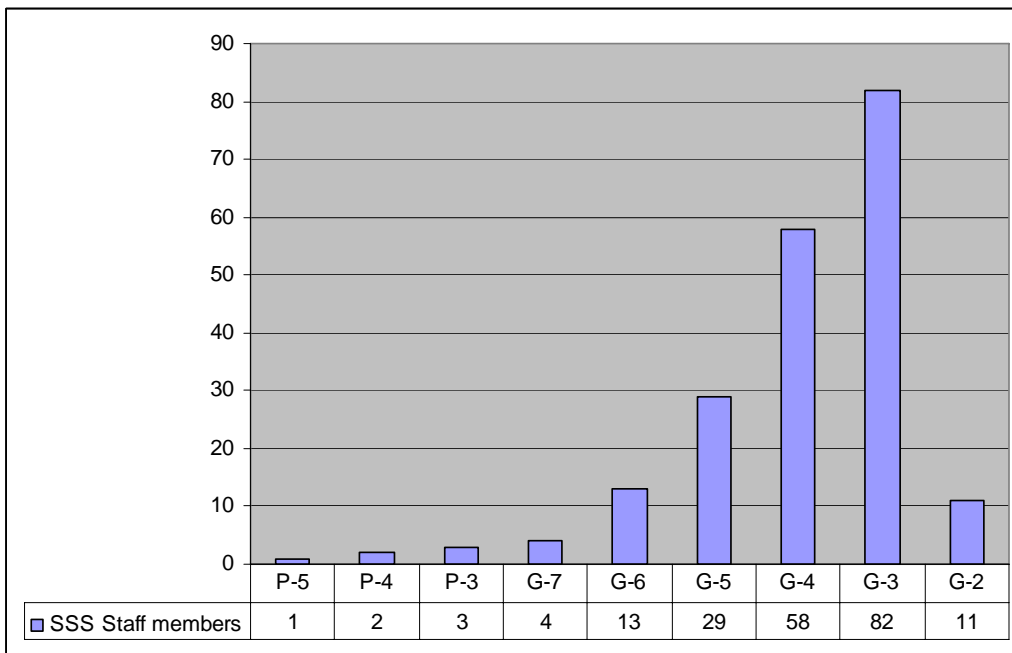
80. Current criteria included in the database focus on recording data relative to past participation of security officers with the limited objective of balancing individual participation, which is an important element but not the most relevant in terms of good management. **The Inspectors consider that the primary role of criteria recorded in the database should be to provide solid ground for effective and transparent designation of candidates while ensuring rotation among qualified staff.** Criteria such as (a) individual specific skills and competencies to be aligned with mission requirements, (b) cultural knowledge and language skills appropriate to the intended geographic region of operations, (c) relevant specialized training, among other, should therefore be included. This approach would ensure diligent care regarding the screening of staff qualifications, as it can play a serious role on the capacity of staff to apprehend risks and threats in remote areas of the world and impact on the success or failure of the mission, ultimately damaging United Nations visibility at large.

81. It is only under these ambitious conditions that the current database could turn into an appropriate roster of candidates to missions' assignments. Moreover, the Inspectors found the recommendation of ACM of security entities in 2008 requesting the harmonization of mission assignment criteria within the United Nations as extremely relevant.

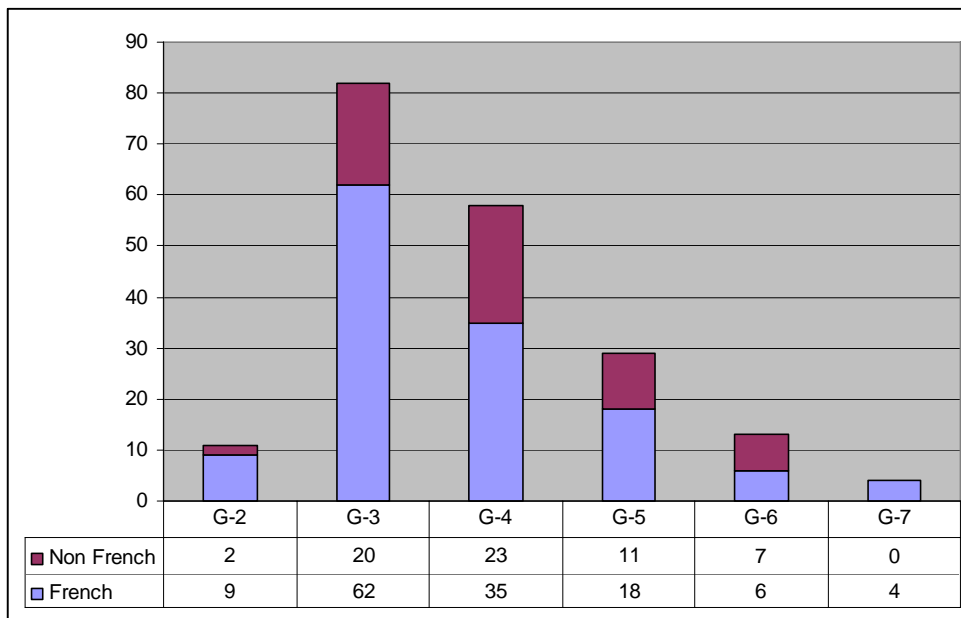
**Recommendation 10: The Chief UNOG SSS should expand the coverage and the structure of the existing internal database in order to equip the section with a management tool supporting effective and transparent decision making for mission assignments.**

**Annex 1: UNOG SSS staffing force profile (as of July 2009)**

**Figure 1: UNOG SSS staff members distributed by grade**



**Figure 2: Diversity within General Service category at UNOG SSS**



Source: ST/ADM/R.64

Annex 2: UNOG SSS organizational chart (as of April 2010)

