

**Staff recruitment in United Nations system
organizations: a comparative analysis and
benchmarking framework**

Gender balance and geographical distribution

Prepared by

***Papa Louis Fall
Yishan Zhang***

**Joint Inspection Unit
Geneva 2012**



United Nations

JIU/NOTE/2012/3

Original: ENGLISH

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ABBREVIATIONS

CEB	United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
ICAO	International Civil Aviation Organization
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMO	International Maritime Organization
ITC	International Trade Centre
ITU	International Telecommunication Union
JIU	Joint Inspection Unit of the United Nations system
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
UNWTO	World Tourism Organization of the United Nations
UPU	Universal Postal Union
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization
WIPO	World Intellectual Property Organization
WMO	World Meteorological Organization

I. INTRODUCTION

1. In the final part of this review of recruitment in United Nations system organizations, the Inspectors have focused on the issues of gender balance and geographical distribution, and how recruitment policies may be used to move towards desired objectives for these principles.
2. The Charter of the United Nations states that “the paramount consideration in the employment of the staff and in the determination of the conditions of service shall be the necessity of securing the highest standards of efficiency, competence, and integrity. **Due regard shall be paid to the importance of recruiting the staff on as wide a geographical basis as possible**” (art. 101, para. 3, emphasis added). Furthermore, “the United Nations shall place no restrictions on the **eligibility of men and women to participate in any capacity and under conditions of equality** in its principal and subsidiary organs” (art. 8, emphasis added).

II. GENDER BALANCE IN RECRUITMENT

Benchmark 14

The principle of 50/50 gender balance is embedded in organizational culture, staff regulations and recruitment strategies, policies, guidelines, procedures and practices, bearing in mind that the paramount consideration in the employment of the staff and the determination of the conditions of service shall be the necessity of securing the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity.

This entails that:

- (a) The principle of 50/50 gender balance is laid down in the staff regulations and recruitment strategies, policies and procedures;
- (b) The 50/50 gender balance is applied to all posts at the professional level and above;
- (c) Progressive annual or biennial gender targets and indicators are set for meeting the overall 50/50 target at the organizational and department levels, especially at the senior management level;
- (d) Targets/indicators are set to recruit a higher proportion of female staff from unrepresented and underrepresented countries;
- (e) Information on gender balance is made available to hiring managers at the time of the selection decision and taken into account in the decision-making process. Review bodies check compliance with it;
- (f) Hiring managers document at the time of selection why no qualified female candidate could be identified, particularly at departments where an imbalance exists;
- (g) Women are represented in the composition of interview/assessment and selection panels and review bodies. Exception reports are required for non-compliance;

(h) Compliance with gender targets is monitored and those with delegated authority for recruitment, including hiring managers and heads of departments, are held accountable for results, including as part of their annual performance appraisal;

(i) Periodic compliance reports are made available to legislative bodies and the public at large through the website of the organizations;

(j) Training on cultural diversity and gender is embedded in competency-based training for competency-based interviewing; and

(k) Gender sensitivity is included among the organizational behavioural competencies to be assessed in the recruitment process, particularly for managers.

A. Institutional framework

Mandated targets

3. The Charter of the United Nations was the first global treaty calling for equality of men and women, and this principle has been taken up by all United Nations system organizations. In 1970, the General Assembly of the United Nations promulgated the first resolution concerning the employment of women by the organizations of the United Nations system, urging them to take appropriate measures to ensure equal opportunities for qualified women in senior and other professional positions. Mandated targets followed, as shown in the box below.¹

4. Various resolutions identified recruitment as the means to redress the gender imbalance. Member States were requested to nominate more women candidates, especially for senior posts, by encouraging women to apply for vacant posts and creating national rosters of women to be shared with the Secretariat, the governing bodies of the specialized agencies and the regional commissions. The Secretary-General was urged to accord greater priority to the recruitment and promotion of women in posts subject to geographical distribution in order to reach the targets.²

Resolution 40/258 B (1985): an overall participation rate of 30 per cent of the total by 1990 for women in posts subject to geographical distribution.

Resolution 45/239 C (1990): an overall participation rate of 30 per cent of the total by 1990 and, to the extent possible, of 35 per cent by 1995. And for D-1 level and above, 25 per cent of the total within the overall participation rate of women in 35 per cent of posts subject to geographical distribution by 1995.

Resolution 50/164 (1995): women to hold 50 per cent of managerial and decision-making positions by 2000;

Resolution 51/67 (1996): overall gender equality, particularly at the Professional level and above, by the year 2000.

5. In addition to the United Nations, several of the funds and programmes have made commitments to achieving the goal of 50 per cent female representation, especially at the P5 level

¹ See annex I for the pertinent text of these resolutions.

² See, for example, United Nations General Assembly resolutions 45/125, para. 2, and 49/167, para. 5.

and above (UNAIDS, UNEP, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNRWA and WFP). UNDP has a target of 50 per cent female representation for overall levels by 2015, and 45/55 ratio for senior levels, while UNOPS aims for gender parity within a 45/55 ratio. UNFPA has stressed its commitment to gender balance but without an explicit target. Among the specialized agencies, IAEA, FAO, ICAO, ILO, UNESCO, UNIDO and WHO are committed to 50/50 gender parity.

Staff regulations

6. Staff regulations in all organizations include the provision that staff shall be selected “without distinction of race, sex or religion”. However, none of them specify gender parity, with the single exception of ICAO, which states that “due regard shall be paid to the importance of ... ensuring equal gender representation”.³ ILO staff regulations recognize “the need to take into account considerations of gender”, while ITU refers to “the desirable balance between female and male staff”.⁴ The Inspectors are of the view that gender parity should be incorporated into the staff regulations of all organizations.

7. As required by the Charter of the United Nations, staff regulations also provide that the paramount consideration in the employment of staff shall be the necessity of securing the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity and that due regard shall be paid to the importance of recruiting the staff on as wide a geographical basis as possible (art. 101).

8. It is clear from the above that, in making appointments, organizations should not compromise standards of efficiency, competence or integrity in order to meet desired objectives for geographical distribution and gender balance, though reconciling the latter two objectives may pose challenges. Indeed, the Inspectors heard in the course of this review that conflicts may arise in trying to satisfy all requirements simultaneously. It is therefore of the utmost importance that those engaged in the recruitment process are provided with administrative instruments that clearly state gender requirements at all steps of the process and given appropriate levels of training and support.

Gender in recruitment policies

9. Some United Nations system organizations make reference to gender balance in their recruitment policies and procedures. UNIDO, for example, refers to the goal of 50/50 gender balance in its administrative instruction on succession planning. UNRWA mentions candidates of the underrepresented gender in its guidance for final selection. Frequently, however, no specific guidance is provided beyond the vague phrase of giving “due respect to gender balance”.

10. Some organizations have adopted special measures to support female recruitment. In the United Nations, women who serve in United Nations funds and programmes or specialized agencies or organizations of the United Nations common system in a P3 or P4 position for at least 12 months are considered internal candidates, provided their appointment has been scrutinized by a review body.⁵ Furthermore, female candidates remain on rosters for three years compared with two years for men. At UNHCR, women who have formerly served in the organization at the professional level may apply as internal candidates for a five year period after separation compared with only two years for men.

11. Several organizations require that at least one woman is included in the list of recommended candidates (FAO, ICAO, United Nations, UNCTAD, UNDP and UNICEF), while UNESCO

³ ICAO Service Code, art. IV, 4.1.

⁴ ILO Staff Regulations, art. 4.2; ITU Staff Regulations 4.2.

⁵ ST/AI/2010/3.

usually requires two women to be among shortlisted and recommended candidates. The Inspectors commend this as a good practice that should be replicated in all organizations.

12. Control mechanisms are needed to ensure adherence to such rules, but were only found in a few organizations. In ICAO, hiring managers are obliged to provide a written justification if no female candidate is included among the shortlisted or recommended candidates. In FAO, the Director-General must give clearance if no female candidate has been recommended before the list can be submitted to the Professional Staff Selection Committee. In UNDP, the Office of Human Resources Directorate has to grant a waiver, which has to be submitted to the review body along with a justification. In UNRWA, review bodies have the explicit instruction that gender be one of the criteria they assess when reviewing selection processes for senior appointments (P4 and above). In UNCTAD, the departmental focal point on gender reviews the selection process in addition to the regular review procedures; the Inspectors commend this as good practice. They are also of the view that women should be represented in ad hoc assessment panels and standing appointment/review bodies; exception reports should be required for non-compliance.

13. The JIU survey asked participants if, among candidates with equal qualifications, due consideration was given to achieving gender balance at the shortlisting, recommendation and final selection stages of the recruitment process. About two thirds of respondents thought that this was frequently or very frequently the case (some 70, 67 and 64 per cent respectively), with about 20 per cent believing it was occasionally the case. The responses were very similar among the organizations with the exception of WFP, where one third of respondents thought that gender considerations were rarely taken into account.

14. Further analysis revealed different perceptions of hiring managers, heads of offices and human resources officials on the one hand, and staff members and staff representatives on the other hand. On average, some 70 per cent of the former group believed that gender balance was frequently/very frequently given due consideration, but only 50 per cent of the latter group held this view.

Recruitment in gender policies and strategies

15. Many organizations have gender policies or strategies in place that aim to improve the status of women, some of which address the issue of recruitment (see box below). Of the organizations reviewed for this report, 15 had a gender policy or strategy in place, while two were developing one.⁶ Most of these strategies formulate specific targets for recruitment of women to achieve organizational goals with regard to gender balance.

United Nations Gender Balance Strategy for the United Nations Secretariat: A Strategic Action Plan, 2010 – the strengthening of recruitment and selection is a main focus, and concrete actions are identified to achieve this goal.

UNDP Gender Equality Strategy, 2008-2011, Empowered and Equal, includes recruitment as one of the “four R’s” of gender parity, the other three being retention, re-entry and recognition (advancement/promotion).

UNESCO Priority Action Plan for Gender Parity includes recruitment as one of its basic axes, along with training and mentoring and work life balance.

⁶ Strategy/policy in place: ILO, ITC, UN, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNEP, UNESCO, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNIDO, UNOPS, UNRWA, WFP, WMO; in development: FAO (finalized and published in June 2012), WIPO.

UNOPS administrative instruction on gender balance outlines measures to recruit more women.

UNRWA Human Resources Gender Policy and Implementation Strategy, 2008, contains detailed instructions on how to include gender considerations in the different steps in the recruitment process (advertising of posts, identification of candidates, interviews, selection and appointment).

B. Progress towards targets

Current status of 50/50 parity

16. The mandated targets for 50/50 gender balance have proved elusive, particularly at the professional level and above (see annex II). In 14 organizations at end-2010, total female staff was at least 50 per cent of total staff, with the highest proportions in ICAO, IFAD and UNESCO. However, only three organizations had reached the 50 per cent target for the professional level and above (UNESCO, UNFPA and UNICEF). Organizations with the lowest proportions of female staff in these positions were IAEA, UNIDO and UPU.

17. Nevertheless, most organizations reviewed had increased the proportion of women employed at the professional level and above between 2005 and 2010, largely reflecting gains at the more junior grades. At entry level (P1/P2), it averaged 51 per cent in 2005 and 54 per cent in 2010. Only a few organizations did not reach the 50 per cent mark at P2 level (IAEA, ITU, UNHCR, UNWTO and WMO). At the P3 level, 10 organizations met the 50 per cent target in 2010, compared with eight in 2005. At the P4 level, however, only UNAIDS and UNICEF met the target in 2010.⁷

18. For senior-level posts (P5 and above), no organization had reached the 50 per cent target by end-2010; UNFPA was the highest with 45.3 per cent, followed by UNICEF with 41.7 per cent (see annex III). The lowest proportions were found in IAEA, ICAO and ITC, while in UNWTO, not a single woman was employed at the P5 level or above.

19. ICAO, ILO, UNICEF and WMO increased the ratio of women recruited for posts at the professional level and above in 2010 compared with 2005; in ILO, the increase was a significant 10 percentage points. The ratio decreased in UNAIDS, ITU and WFP and remained unchanged at WHO.

20. Member States have recently reiterated their serious concern about the slow progress made towards the goal of 50/50 gender balance in the United Nations system, especially at senior and policymaking levels.⁸

Reasons for the persistence of gender imbalance in recruitment

21. In the early 1990s, JIU examined the issue of the advancement of women in the United Nations system and made a series of recommendations, including the development of action programmes. More than 15 years later, many of these recommendations are still pertinent, especially those relating to statistical reporting, monitoring and accountability, and training and gender awareness, issues discussed again below.

22. In responses to questionnaires and interviews undertaken for this review, it was stated that the mission of some organizations, such as UNICEF and UN-Women, appeared to be more likely to

⁷ CEB Personnel Statistics, 2005 and 2010.

⁸ United Nations General Assembly resolution 66/234, para. 2.

attract female applicants than others. Likewise, for certain types of jobs in some occupational categories, such as administration, human resources and library/archives. Yet, several organizations voiced concerns about the difficulties of trying to increase the ratio of women recruited because of the low number of female applicants. IAEA, UNCTAD and UNIDO reported that it was more difficult to get qualified women for very technical and specialized fields, especially from unrepresented and underrepresented countries. The statistics would seem to confirm this report. At IAEA, in particular, women accounted for only 25 per cent of total applicants.

23. Some organizations operating in difficult working environments in the field also found it more difficult to attract female applicants and recruit qualified women for field positions, especially at hardship duty stations. This was reported in particular by OCHA, the United Nations, UNHCR and WFP. At OCHA, the statistics indicate that in the field the gender ratio is 30 per cent of professional women whereas at headquarters is 55 per cent. Similarly the United Nations has made comparatively little progress in increasing the percentage of women at the professional level and above (from 37.4 per cent in 2005 to 39.2 per cent in 2010), one reason being the low proportion of women serving in peacekeeping operations (only 29 per cent). FAO and UNODC reported similar difficulties in attracting women for field posts.

24. UNRWA seems to be an exception in this regard, as it has a better gender balance in the field than at headquarters since most junior staff are located in the field and there are more women employed at lower levels. UNRWA thus considers seniority rather than location to be the more relevant factor in determining lower female representation. This supports the view that it is not necessarily hardship conditions that prevent women from serving in the field but rather other family considerations and lack of supportive policies to foster recruitment of women for higher-level posts.

25. In those organizations that have little external recruitment or have phased it down temporarily, such as UNDP, WFP and WHO, increasing female representation is challenging. Without external recruitment, the total number of women in the organization remains unchanged and an improvement of gender balance at higher levels can only be achieved by promoting women. At UNICEF the use of internal pools for filling senior positions was mentioned as one of the reasons for lower female representation at this level. This is being addressed through greater diversity in the pipeline into leadership posts.

C. Towards achieving 50/50 parity

Increasing women applicants

26. Many organizations have sought to find ways of attracting more women to apply for vacancies. Some actively engage in outreach campaigns and share vacancy announcements with universities, professional associations and women networks (FAO, IAEA, OCHA, United Nations, UNCTAD, UNESCO, UNICEF, UNODC, UNOPS, UNRWA, WFP, WHO and WMO). UNESCO intends to increasingly use the network of gender focal points to disseminate job openings. Member States can also be involved in this process and invited to propose suitable female candidates. WMO, for example, encourages their member States to actively promote equal opportunities for men and women, especially in technical fields. In IMO, UNESCO, the United Nations, UNRWA, WFP and WHO, vacancy announcements contain a standard sentence that women are especially encouraged to apply.

27. In view of the concerns raised with regard to the many and possibly conflicting demands on hiring managers, support should also be offered to them for outreach in vacancy announcements.

In UNODC, for example, the request for outreach made by the Human Resources Management Service is accompanied with an offer of assistance should hiring managers require it.

28. Rosters can be used as a tool for improving gender balance by increasing the pool of potential female candidates, as is the case in WHO. The current roster management system of the United Nations Secretariat provides the facility to search rosters using a variety of filters, including gender. Similarly, the e-recruitment system at WFP has a search engine which allows filtering for different criteria, among others gender.

Setting, monitoring and reporting on targets

29. Achieving the 50 per cent target at all levels in the near future, especially in senior positions, will require significant and focused efforts. The Inspectors noted that very few organizations had set specific timelines to reach the target, yet these are crucial both to provide an impetus to close the gap and to monitor progress. In addition, recruitment efforts must be suitably directed if the imbalance is to be redressed. While there should be more female than male recruitment at all professional and above levels, the differences should be relatively greater at P5 level and above, where the imbalance is higher, as well as at entry-level positions. The entry-level recruitment is crucial to create a sufficiently large pool of female staff to facilitate the promotion of women in the longer term.

30. The Inspectors recognize that progress may be constrained by the number of positions available for external hiring, either newly established or the incumbent of which is due for retirement, which is likely to be quite limited. They therefore commend those organizations that have put in place specific and progressive targets and timelines for attaining the goal. UNESCO, for example, has set interim recruitment targets for each biennium up to 2015. In FAO, the human resources management division develops a corporate plan for gender and geographical distribution with targets for each department/office. And the UNHCR gender policy determines that 60 per cent of recruitment should be women until gender parity is reached.

31. Monitoring and reporting systems need to be in place to measure progress towards 50/50 gender parity and detect underperformance. These systems can only function effectively if the contributions expected from officers engaged in recruitment are clearly defined and responsibilities spelled out. Accountability mechanisms must also be in place and must be seen to be working.

32. Some officials indicated that the delegation of authority to hiring managers was one of the potential risk factors for achieving a gender-balanced workforce. The Inspectors are of the view, however, that the problem lies more with the challenge of monitoring the delegated responsibility and holding individuals accountable for their decisions. Many organizations that have formulated targets indicated in their questionnaire responses that there is no accountability structure in place which would allow monitoring and enforce compliance even if there are written rules and policies regarding the selection process.

33. There must be a system which allows data-tracking for the whole organization. This centralized monitoring system should gather gender-disaggregated data on applications and appointments, if possible by category and occupational group. The responsibility for monitoring should also be clearly defined. Figures on how the organization fares with regard to the different recruitment targets could be used as a basis to determine the order of priority of those targets.

34. Even where recruitment is decentralized and selection authority delegated to heads of offices, all hiring managers should be accountable for their decisions. Their contribution to the

achievement of the organizational gender target in recruitment should be a fixed part of their performance assessment, as the Inspectors note is the case in UNEP. The United Nations and UNRWA have scorecard systems which allow tracking of progress against a range of targets, including gender. At the United Nations, the human resources action plans set and monitor the target of 50 per cent female selection in the professional and director categories, but without complementary support and tracking mechanisms and accountability, they are not effective. In 2009, only 15 out of 30 departments/offices met this target for selections to professional-level posts, and 10 for selections to director-level posts, and this worsened in 2010 to only 11 and 6, respectively.

35. In view of the responsibilities delegated to hiring managers to achieve different organizational targets for recruitment, including gender targets, it is of the utmost importance that they are fully supported when taking their decisions. In WFP, for example, application statistics (number and percentage of women applicants for each roster and position) are calculated automatically by the e-recruitment system. These statistics are passed to the hiring manager together with the pre-screening results to provide them with pertinent information to support their decision-making.

36. Finally, some organizations report their progress in achieving gender parity on a regular basis to a monitoring authority which can be review bodies (UNRWA), the member States (ILO and WIPO) or the executive board (UNICEF); this is good practice. The Inspectors would like to stress that, in the interests of transparency and accountability, it is desirable that these reports be accessible to as wide a public as possible, as is the annual report of the Secretary-General of the United Nations on the status of women in the Secretariat. This also contributes to raising awareness of gender issues within the organization, and externally with member States, Governments and the public at large.

Creating a culture of gender sensitivity

37. It is crucial that staff of an organization have a general awareness of gender issues, and this is particularly important for hiring managers. Some organizations have started to use gender sensitivity as a selection criterion in the recruitment process and to include it in job descriptions and vacancy announcements (United Nations, UNDP, UNEP and UNICEF) or a competency to be assessed in interviews of prospective candidates. Not meeting such criteria or lacking this competency is then a sufficient reason to reject a candidate for a post.

38. Making gender sensitivity an underlying attitude characterizing the culture of an organization is a precondition for a true and comprehensive realization of gender equality. The Inspectors are of the view that there should be gender training in the workforce already employed and particularly for hiring managers and members of assessment panels and review bodies to raise general awareness of the issue and help create an enabling environment in which gender parity is not reduced to numbers but it is rooted in behaviours. The presence of gender focal points and staff representatives in these panels and bodies should contribute to create such awareness.

III. GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION IN RECRUITMENT

Benchmark 15

The principle of equitable geographical distribution is embedded in organizational culture, staff regulations and recruitment strategies, policies, guidelines, procedures and practices, bearing in mind that the paramount consideration in the employment of the staff and the determination of the conditions of service shall be the necessity of securing the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity.

This entails that:

(a) The principle of equitable geographical distribution is laid down in the staff regulations and recruitment strategies, policies, guidelines and procedures;

(b) The determination of equitable geographical distribution is not solely based on the criterion of member States' contributions;

(c) All posts at the professional level and above established for one year or more are subject to equitable geographical distribution;

(d) Targets/indicators are set to improve the proportion of staff from unrepresented and underrepresented countries;

(e) Information on unrepresented, underrepresented and overrepresented countries is made available to hiring managers at the time of selection decision and taken into account in the decision-making process. The representation status of the country of each recommended candidate is indicated. Exception reports are required to hire candidates from overrepresented countries. Review bodies check compliance with this requirement of the benchmark;

(f) Every effort is made to attract and recruit highly competent candidates from all countries of the world, including through special recruitment campaigns;

(g) Compliance with equitable geographical distribution targets is monitored and hiring managers are made accountable for results, including as part of their annual performance appraisal; and

(h) Compliance reports are submitted regularly to legislative bodies and the public at large through the website of the organizations.

A. Institutional framework

A mandated requirement

39. The importance of recruiting the staff on as wide a geographical basis as possible, as laid down in article 101, paragraph 3, of the Charter of the United Nations, has been a constant preoccupation of the Member States. The preamble of one of the earliest United Nations General Assembly resolutions on the composition of the Secretariat spells out the idea which lies at the core of the principle of geographical distribution: "in view of its international character and in order to avoid undue predominance of national practices, the policies and administrative methods

of the Secretariat should reflect, and profit to the highest degree from, assets of the various cultures and the technical competence of all Member nations”.⁹

40. Subsequent resolutions refer to the principle of “equitable geographical distribution”, as in resolution 57/305 where the Secretary-General is requested “to further increase his efforts to improve the composition of the Secretariat by ensuring a wide and equitable geographical distribution of staff in all departments” and lately in resolution 63/250. This concept, which in the Charter only appears in relation to the composition of the Security Council,¹⁰ is complementary to the principle of recruiting from “as wide a geographical basis as possible”.

41. It has been also stressed that equitable geographical representation is a concern especially for senior posts within the system. In resolution 66/234, the Secretary-General is again requested “to continue his ongoing efforts to ensure the attainment of equitable geographical distribution in the Secretariat and to also ensure as wide a geographical distribution of staff as possible in all departments, offices and levels, including at the Director and higher levels, of the Secretariat”.¹¹

Staff regulations

42. The staff regulations of most United Nations system organizations state that the paramount consideration in recruitment shall be the “necessity of securing the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity” and also usually add immediately after that “due regard shall be paid to selecting staff on as wide a geographical basis as possible”.¹² WHO uses a slightly different wording, namely: “the paramount considerations in the selection of staff shall be competence and integrity. For posts in the professional category and above, geographical representation shall also be given full consideration.”¹³

43. The phrases “due regard” and “full consideration” may be open to different interpretations. IAEA, UNICEF and UNWTO are explicit in that the geographical consideration is only taken into account “subject to” the principles of efficiency, integrity and (technical) competence.

44. In ITU and UPU, there is a similar provision that “preference should be given, other qualifications being equal, to candidates from *regions* of the world which are not represented or are insufficiently represented” (emphasis added). UPU goes further, specifying that in the selection an “equitable geographical distribution in respect of continents and languages together with all other relevant considerations” should be taken into account, as well as “the principle that the persons occupying the posts in grades D-2, D-1 and P-5 must be nationals of different member countries of the Union.”¹⁴

Various systems of geographical distribution

Definitions

⁹ United Nations General Assembly resolution 153 (II).

¹⁰ Charter of the United Nations, Chapter V, Article 23, para. 1.

¹¹ United Nations General Assembly resolution 66/234, para. 5.

¹² Among the reviewed organizations, this wording can be found in the staff regulations of FAO, ICAO, ILO, IMO, ITU, United Nations and its funds, programmes and offices (UNDP, UNEP, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, United Nations Office at Vienna and UNODC), UNIDO, UNRWA, WFP and WMO. Similarly, WIPO Staff Regulation 4.2 reads: “Due account shall be taken of the importance of recruiting staff on as broad and fair a geographical basis as possible”.

¹³ WHO Staff Regulation 410.1.

¹⁴ UPU Staff Regulation 4.8.

45. The concept of equitable geographical distribution allows for a range of interpretations and requires specification if it is to be implemented and taken into account in the recruitment process. To this end, the system of “desirable ranges” was introduced in the United Nations Secretariat in 1948 calculating for each Member State a range of posts within which it would be considered adequately represented. Up to 1962, the calculations of these desirable ranges were based solely on the financial contributions of Member States. In resolution 1852 (XVII), it was decided that two further factors should be taken into account: membership in the United Nations (ascribing each Member State an equal number of posts) and the population of a Member State (distributing posts proportionally to a Member State’s population). These three factors differ in the weight they are accorded in the calculation.

46. In the current weighting, applied from 1988, 40 per cent of the posts are allotted via the membership factor, 5 per cent via the population factor, and 55 per cent in proportion to the scale of the assessments of Member States.¹⁵ The posts calculated via each factor are then added and result in a number of posts constituting the midpoint of the desirable range (15 per cent upward and downward from the midpoint). The Inspectors acknowledge this attempt to capture different aspects of equitable geographical distribution, even if this comes at the expense of simplicity.

47. Other organizations in the United Nations system differ with regard to the methods they apply for determining equitable geographical distribution. A comprehensive assessment of methods was conducted by JIU in 1996.¹⁶

48. Among the organizations reviewed, the United Nations Secretariat was found to have the most sophisticated calculation of geographical distribution, together with FAO, ILO, UNESCO, WHO and UNIDO which apply similar systems of desirable ranges. Whereas FAO, UNEP and UNIDO make their calculations on the same basis as the Secretariat,¹⁷ UNESCO and WHO attribute different weight to each of the three factors.¹⁸

49. ILO only uses the assessed budgetary contribution of each Member State as a basis to calculate the desirable range.¹⁹ Similarly, ICAO calculates a desirable level for States on the basis of membership and assessment.

50. In accordance with the decision by the United Nations General Assembly that the system of desirable ranges has been designed to apply to countries instead of regions or groups, most organizations calculate the geographical ranges or quota for each member State.²⁰ By contrast, the WIPO approach is based on seven regions, among which one quarter of the posts is distributed equally and the remaining three quarters in proportion to their contribution.

51. Some organizations (UNDP, UNICEF and WFP) see equitable geographical distribution in terms of a balance between donor/industrialized countries and programme/developing countries, or between North and South (UNHCR and UNRWA). The reason given by UNICEF and WFP for this different approach was that they are financed by voluntary as opposed to assessed contributions.

¹⁵ In addition, it is provided that the 15 per cent cannot be less than 4.8 posts up and down, and the upper limit of the range not less than 14 posts. See United Nations General Assembly resolution 42/220 A.

¹⁶ JIU/REP/96/7.

¹⁷ The system applied by FAO differs slightly in that the 15 per cent flexibility is limited to 2.03 posts up and down, and the upper limit of ranges is 7.53 posts (FAO resolution 15/2003, para. 1).

¹⁸ UNESCO 32 C/Resolution 71; WHO resolution WHA56.35 (2003).

¹⁹ But those Member States whose contributions amount to 0.2 per cent of the budget or less are assigned 1–2 posts, ILO Geographical Distribution Formula of 29 November 2003, provided by ILO.

²⁰ See for example United Nations General Assembly resolution 63/250, para. 14.

52. WFP reported that, although there is no quota, an informal formula is applied whereby 60 per cent of international posts are allocated to the major donor countries. Although this ratio refers to regional groups, WFP indicated that their recruitment branch is monitoring the number of applications received from both underrepresented donor and developing countries. The Inspectors consider it important to have an additional system in place which allows calculation of underrepresentation on a country basis.

53. IMO, ITU, UNAIDS, UNFPA, UNWTO and UPU do not apply a quota system, but indicated that geographical balance is taken into account. It is recognized that it might be difficult in small organizations to introduce quotas due to the limited number of posts.

Applicability

54. In most organizations, general service staff are recruited locally and those posts are not generally subject to geographical distribution. Temporary staff are also excluded, although a few organizations, including IAEA and FAO, attempt to consider geographical distribution in employing non-staff resources such as consultants.

55. In the majority of organizations, geographical distribution only applies to professional-level posts within the regular budget, usually excluding linguistic posts. This means that only a small proportion of overall posts is included. Of the organizations for which figures were available, only in IAEA (50.7 per cent), UNIDO (43.72 per cent) and ICAO (39.2 per cent) did this proportion amount to more than one third of the posts.

56. At the United Nations only 11.28 per cent of all posts are subject to geographical distribution, in OCHA only 2.9 per cent and in ILO only 1.64 per cent. The low proportion at the United Nations is due to the fact that the system of desirable ranges was designed to fit a Secretariat in which most posts were at that time regular budget professional posts – meanwhile, a large number of posts in the Secretariat are today located in the peacekeeping missions and are thus extrabudgetary. United Nations General Assembly resolution 63/250 points to the considerable change in the composition and number of staff in the Secretariat within the previous 20 years and calls for a review of the system of desirable ranges.²¹ Recent resolutions concerning geographical distribution have also highlighted the need to ensure the proper representation of troop-contributing countries in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support of the Secretariat, taking into account their contribution to United Nations peacekeeping.²² This provision aims to compensate for the fact that the majority of current positions are not subject to the system of desirable ranges.

57. The Inspectors are of the view that all posts at the professional level and above established for one year or more should be subject to the requirement of equitable geographical distribution. This would be in line with the intent of the member States as clearly expressed in resolutions since the founding of the United Nations.

Selection policies

58. The staff-selection policies of many organizations include provisions for taking candidates from unrepresented or underrepresented countries into account in the recruitment process. Few selection policies specify, however, exactly how and at which point in the selection process geographical distribution should be taken into consideration.

²¹ United Nations General Assembly resolution 63/250, sect. IX, para. 17.

²² United Nations General Assembly resolution 65/247, sect. VII, para. 65.

59. Only UNESCO has a formal requirement that candidates from unrepresented/underrepresented countries be included in the shortlists. In ICAO, a justification is needed if candidates from non- or underrepresented countries are not included in the long/shortlists or recommendations. Likewise, if a candidate from an overrepresented state is selected, a justification has to be added to the recommendation report and the hiring manager has to defend the recommendation in the meeting of the appointment board. In WFP, the hiring unit has to include statistics in their recommendation report and highlight the nationality of the selected candidate.

60. In ILO, provided that standards of competency and efficiency are met, candidates from unrepresented/underrepresented countries are given consideration prior to other candidates, after internal candidates have been considered. The Inspectors were informed that it is a regular practice by HRD in ILO to withhold the applications of candidates from overrepresented countries after the pre-screening and only release them if hiring managers have provided “comprehensive written justification” as to why the other candidates are not suitable.

61. At the United Nations, heads of departments are required to certify at the time of selection that candidates from unrepresented/underrepresented countries have been given “due consideration”. This is in line with the practice reported by most organizations that issues of gender and geographical balance come into play at the moment of the final selection between candidates of equal qualifications. In UNOPS, the hiring manager is required to show the central review bodies how the organization’s priorities for these issues have been taken into account. In UNIDO, the appointment board considers the compliance of a selection with the system of desirable ranges. Likewise in IAEA, where the human resources division adds a dossier to the recommendations made by the division director detailing its views on the selection taking into account the issues of gender and geographical distribution, which will then be circulated to the Joint Advisory Panel.

B. Progress towards targets

62. A concern often raised by the organizations is that the number of suitable applicants from unrepresented/underrepresented countries is too low, and that a strict requirement would maybe compromise the “paramount consideration” of ensuring highest standards of competence. Organizations, especially in those in need of highly specialized technical experts, were particularly concerned about the limited number of qualified applicants from unrepresented/underrepresented countries.

63. The figures provided by the organizations seem to confirm this: at the United Nations 27 per cent of applicants for professional posts in 2010 came from the African region, 22.4 per cent from Asia and 38.7 per cent from Western Europe and other States. However, the figures for recruitment do not reflect these proportions: of the selected candidates, 13.3 per cent came from Africa, 15.7 per cent from Asia and 57 per cent from Western Europe.

64. IAEA indicated that even though they get applications from a large number of developing countries (from 93 out of 97 member States belonging to this group), 90 per cent of these applications come from only 42 of those countries. Evidence for such a geographical concentration of people with relevant degrees and qualifications can also be found in a UNESCO report which shows the large differences in the enrolment ratio per cohort by geographical region.

65. The Inspectors believe it is important that awareness of the issue of geographical distribution is raised among all persons involved in recruitment. UNESCO, for example, includes issues of geographical distribution in its induction training for senior managers which is regarded as a good

practice. The United Nations Secretariat has created a full-time focal point function in OHRM for geographical distribution which can provide help to officials charged with recruitment.

Setting, monitoring and reporting on targets

66. In order to respond to the requests of the United Nations General Assembly and ensure progress towards a more equitable geographical distribution of staff, the Secretariat has formulated departmental targets with regard to recruitment: 20 per cent of recruitment to posts subject to geographical distribution should be from unrepresented or underrepresented countries. This target excludes recruitment to P2 posts, as those are to be filled through the National Competitive Examination/Young Professionals Programme which target unrepresented countries. FAO similarly sets annual targets by department and also requires that 60 per cent of junior professionals be recruited from unrepresented and underrepresented developing countries.

67. UNCTAD indicated a target of 20 per cent of recruitment from unrepresented/underrepresented member states, while UNODC has different targets for each group (25 and 20 per cent respectively). ICAO and UNESCO both set considerably higher targets, aiming at 50 per cent recruitments from unrepresented/underrepresented countries.

68. As these organizations' definitions of underrepresentation vary, their targets and progress are not directly comparable, so performance of the organizations has to be judged in relation to their own targets.

69. Although most of these organizations have increased recruitment from unrepresented/underrepresented countries for posts subject to geographical distribution, none with the exception of UNODC had reached their targets in 2010. Progress, however was noticeable: in ICAO, for instance, 19.4 per cent of recruitment came from non-represented and 27.7 per cent from underrepresented countries, corresponding to an overall increase of 10 per cent compared with 2005.

70. In the United Nations Secretariat 86 per cent of departments had achieved 20 per cent recruitment from unrepresented/underrepresented countries in 2010. But comparison with past performance is not yet possible, as human resources scorecards, which measure targets by department relative to past performance, were only introduced in 2011.

71. The Inspectors consider the setting of targets as good practice. These targets, as well as statistics on the status of geographical representation of member States and ongoing application processes and their possible impact on geographical distribution, should be made available to the officials charged with recruitment. The e-recruitment system at the United Nations has a function that allows hiring managers to obtain a table listing applicants by nationality, although the representation status of the countries is not included which is considered a shortcoming in the system. In this respect, the practice in WHO stands out where hiring managers can access a list of countries from which recruitment is encouraged, and for each candidate in the list of applicants the status of representation of his/her nationality is visible.

72. UNESCO similarly stated that it draws attention to those countries which are unrepresented or underrepresented or at the risk of becoming so due to retirements.²³ In IAEA, UNODC and WFP, it is also an established practice that the human resources department supports hiring officials by providing them with statistics on gender and geographical distribution. In WFP, these

²³ UNESCO, Report by the Director-General on the situation concerning the geographical distribution and gender balance of the staff of the secretariat, 10 August 2011, document 36 C/41.

statistics on the number and percentage of applicants from underrepresented developing countries are automatically calculated by the e-recruitment system. In IAEA, a detailed projection of vacancies is made in order to allow a timely search for candidates fitting the required patterns for gender and geographical distribution.

73. As with gender balance, organizations must systematically monitor performance in relation to the targets for geographical distribution and report regularly to the governing bodies. Comprehensive monitoring and reporting systems, such as the United Nations Secretariat's recently introduced human resources scorecard system, should include geographical distribution as one of the targets. The scorecards formulate departmental targets in reference to prior departmental performance and monitoring is also on a departmental basis. Through their senior compacts, heads of departments are accountable to the Secretary-General for ensuring compliance of their departments with the targets laid down in these scorecards.

74. The human resources strategy of OCHA provides for the introduction of a monitoring system to hold managers accountable for the achievement of recruitment goals such as gender and geographical balance. A list with selection decisions would be sent annually to senior management, showing the managers' performance with regard to the recruitment targets. This approach seems commendable, but it must be stressed that in order for managers to be able to comply with the targets the status of the department's performance and the relevant timelines need to be provided.

75. Regular and comprehensive reporting of statistics on performance with regard to geographical distribution is done by most organizations except UNWTO, UPU and WMO. The statistics should be reported on a country, rather than a regional basis, a practice most organizations adhere to, except UNHCR and UNRWA which report on a regional basis.

76. The United Nations has recently launched a reporting tool, Human Resources Insight, which provides a range of data to the permanent missions, including performance against the desirable ranges for geographical distribution.

77. For illustrative purposes, UNESCO included in its 2011 report on geographical distribution the representational status when a post-weighting approach is applied. The annex to the report shows not only the representation status of countries, but also their exact level, by giving the number of units by which they are overrepresented/underrepresented. In addition, the retirements per country and grade are listed with a special focus on their impact on the geographical distributions. Such comprehensive reporting is highly commendable and provides a useful tool both for officials engaged in the recruitment process and for public information.

C. Measures to improve geographical distribution

Freezing recruitment from overrepresented countries

78. None of the organizations reviewed for this report has an official mechanism in place for freezing recruitment from overrepresented countries.²⁴ When officials were asked their opinion on such a measure, most indicated that this would not be feasible (due to a lack of qualified

²⁴ It should be noted that, in 2007, JIU recommended that the United Nations General Assembly should introduce a temporary maximum level on the recruitment of new professional staff (P1 to P5) to Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights from overrepresented regions until such time as a geographical balance had been reached (JIU/REP/2007/8, recommendation 8).

applicants from unrepresented/underrepresented countries) or not in accordance with their recruitment principles. Moreover, as mentioned by the United Nations, it is very unlikely that all member States would agree to such an approach.

79. At FAO, consultation with the Director-General is required if a candidate from an overrepresented country is to be interviewed. It was reported that in practice hiring managers rarely make use of this opportunity amounting to a de facto freeze for recruitment in those cases. Accordingly, in FAO quite a low number of States is actually overrepresented (5.2 per cent), over half of the member States being within range.²⁵

Increasing recruitment from unrepresented and underrepresented countries

80. Many organizations undertake outreach measures to attract more applicants from unrepresented/underrepresented countries, including:

- Special recruitment missions and workshops;
- Participation in job fairs, conventions and scientific conferences;
- Communication with national focal points for facilitating collaboration;
- Meeting with representatives of underrepresented states;
- Publication of vacancy announcements in local professional media or specialized websites or via social media, as well as their dissemination among professional networks in relevant countries and among member States.

81. The organizations considered that these outreach programmes had been successful in attracting more applications, and significantly so in UNESCO. ILO reported that the number of applicants from unrepresented/underrepresented countries had increased to 10 per cent and 13 per cent respectively due to outreach measures.²⁶ Young professionals' programmes are also being used in many organizations for targeted recruitment of highly qualified young people, in particular from developing and/or inadequately represented regions.

82. Another measure is the inclusion in vacancy announcements of standard sentences that encourage people from underrepresented countries to apply (FAO and WFP). IAEA reported that the introduction of a web-based application system has had a large impact, doubling the number of applications received, with over 40 per cent of those applications coming from developing countries.

83. In WHO a working group on diversity has been set up, which considers not only gender and geographical balance but also other diversity issues such as representation of developing countries and disabled persons. The organization has been implementing affirmative measures to increase geographical diversity since 2003, with some encouraging results.

²⁵ See International Civil Service Commission, annual report 2011, A/66/30, sect. E, table 2.

²⁶ ILO, "Overview of ILO Recruitment Practices for Professional Staff", p. 1.

Annex I**United Nations General Assembly targets for gender equality**

Resolution 2715 (XXV) (1970) urged the United Nations, including its special bodies and all intergovernmental agencies in the United Nations system, to take or continue to take appropriate measures to ensure equal opportunities for the employment of qualified women in senior and other professional positions.

Resolution 40/258 B (1985) requested the Secretary-General to take the necessary measures to increase the number of women in posts subject to geographical distribution with a view to achieving, to the extent possible, an overall participation rate of 30 per cent of the total by 1990, without prejudice to the principle of equitable geographical distribution of posts.

Resolution 45/125 (1990) urged the Secretary-General to continue all possible efforts to increase the number of women employed throughout the United Nations system, particularly in senior policy-level and decision-making posts, and particularly from developing countries, in order to achieve an overall participation rate of 30 per cent by the end of 1990 and 35 per cent by 1995, with due regard to equitable geographical distribution.

Resolution 45/239 C (1990) urged the Secretary-General to continue his efforts to increase the number of women in posts subject to geographical distribution, particularly in senior policy-level and decision-making posts, in order to achieve an overall participation rate of 30 per cent by the end of 1990 and, to the extent possible, 35 per cent by 1995, taking into account the principle that the paramount consideration shall be the necessity of securing the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity with full respect for the principle of equitable geographical distribution. It also urged the Secretary-General, all things being equal and to the extent possible, to accord priority to the participation of women at the D1 level and above with a view to increasing the participation rate of women in posts at the D1 level and above to 25 per cent of the total within the overall participation rate of women in 35 per cent of posts subject to geographical distribution by 1995.

Resolution 50/164 (1995) called upon the Secretary-General to fulfil his target of having women hold 50 per cent of managerial and decision-making positions by the year 2000.

Resolution 51/67 (1996) called upon the Secretary-General to ensure full and urgent implementation of the strategic plan of action for the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat (1995-2000) in order to achieve the goal contained in the Platform for Action adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women for overall gender equality, particularly at the Professional level and above, by the year 2000.

Annex II
Status of 50/50 gender balance, 2005 and 2010^a

Organization	P level staff and above Female/Total <i>per cent</i>		GS staff Female/Total <i>per cent</i>		Total staff Female/Total <i>per cent</i>	
	2005	2010	2005	2010	2005	2010
United Nations and funds, programmes and offices						
United Nations	37.4	39.2	50.5	30.1	44.8	32.5
UNHCR	40.4	42.5	36.1	35.9	37.4	37.8
UNRWA	26.8	42.5	66.7	29.4	29.5	41.4
UNDP	39.5	42.2	58.3	57.9	52.2	51.7
UNFPA	49.9	50.5	58.0	53.8	55.1	52.6
UNICEF	45.0	50.5	51.7	49.4	49.4	49.8
UNOPS	29.8	29.0	64.5	60.0	45.4	39.3
WFP	40.8	41.2	48.0	39.9	44.8	40.3
Specialized agencies and IAEA						
ILO	41.3	43.6	64.3	63.0	55.0	54.8
FAO	28.3	33.0	63.9	64.5	49.2	50.1
UNESCO	45.4	51.4	63.9	62.3	55.4	57.1
ICAO	23.3	30.7	80.1	78.9	53.3	57.9
WHO	35.9	39.9	59.8	51.4	49.5	47.2
UPU	22.2	28.2	57.6	60.4	41.0	43.3
ITU	31.4	35.0	70.3	71.1	54.8	54.3
WMO	27.0	30.3	75.7	71.5	53.7	50.0
IMO	34.3	41.2	64.9	63.3	51.3	52.2
WIPO	41.9	43.4	64.8	62.3	53.8	52.5
UNIDO	25.4	28.4	58.3	55.8	44.9	44.2
UNWTO	37.8	37.2	68.5	69.2	56.0	54.7
IAEA	18.9	23.9	60.5	62.3	41.2	42.8
JIU non-participating organizations						
ITC	32.3	36.4	80.8	80.0	53.8	54.5
IFAD	43.9	42.8	80.9	82.4	62.3	61.1

Source: CEB Personnel Statistics, 2005 and 2010.

^a Data as at 31 December 2005 and 31 December 2010.

Annex III
Female senior staff at the P5 level and above, 2010^a
(Number and percentage of total senior staff)

Organization	P5	D1	D2	Above D2	Total	All P5 and above	per cent
UNFPA	87	26	4	3	120	265	45.3
UNICEF	218	40	14	1	273	654	41.7
UNHCR	74	33	5	2	114	305	37.4
WFP	83	29	10	3	125	348	35.9
UNDP	210	109	25	6	350	983	35.6
UNESCO	64	16	6	6	92	264	34.8
ILO	90	35	6	4	135	413	32.7
WHO	231	46	7	8	292	938	31.1
UN	455	137	38	32	662	2260	29.3
IMO	14	2	2	0	18	66	27.3
WIPO	34	4	1	1	40	162	24.7
UNRWA	7	5	0	1	13	54	24.1
UPU	2	3	0	0	5	21	23.8
UNOPS	18	6	3	0	27	115	23.5
WMO	10	4	1	1	16	72	22.2
FAO	80	7	6	4	97	479	20.3
ITU	17	2	1	0	20	106	18.9
UNIDO	11	8	1	0	20	118	16.9
ICAO	7	2	3	0	12	73	16.4
IAEA	43	4	4	1	52	337	15.4
UNWTO	0	0	0	0	0	13	0.0
JIU non-participating organizations							
ITC	7	2	0	1	10	32	31.3
IFAD	21	4	1	2	28	106	26.4
Total	1783	524	138	76	2521	8184	30.8

Source: CEB Personnel Statistics, 2010.

^a Data as at 31 December 2010.