



Secretariat

ST/AI/292
15 July 1982

ADMINISTRATIVE INSTRUCTION

To: Members of the staff

From: The Assistant Secretary-General for Personnel Services

Subject: FILING OF ADVERSE MATERIAL IN PERSONNEL RECORDS

1. In his first address to the Headquarters staff, the Secretary-General stated that "anything that is adverse to the staff member should not go on a confidential file unless it has been shown to the person concerned." The purpose of this instruction is to establish interim guidelines in implementation of that decision, pending completion of a comprehensive review, in consultation with the staff, of the system of personnel records.
2. Adverse material shall mean any correspondence, memorandum, report, note or other paper that reflects adversely on the character, reputation, conduct or performance of a staff member. As a matter of principle, such material may not be included in the personnel file unless it has been shown to the staff member concerned and the staff member is thereby given an opportunity to make comments thereon. It shall be handled and filed in accordance with the procedures set out below, depending upon its source.
3. Adverse material may originate from sources outside the Organization or from other staff members in their personal capacity commenting on a staff member's behaviour or activities. If the material is anonymous, it will be discarded. Otherwise, the incoming communication will be shown to the staff member, who will be asked to comment on the allegations, if a question of his or her conduct is involved. Both the adverse material and the staff member's comments will be kept in the non-privileged portion of the confidential file to which the staff member will have access.
4. Another category of adverse material may originate from Governments. If the information is communicated to the Secretary-General under terms of confidentiality, the Secretary-General is obliged to treat the material as privileged and will not be in a position to disclose its contents to the staff

member concerned. However, it will be an established procedure that, upon receipt of such communications, the Secretary-General will advise the Government that information on the staff member cannot be taken into consideration for any official purpose in connexion with the staff member's career unless the Government agrees to its communication to the staff member. The material will then be shown to the staff member for comment, and both the incoming communications and the staff member's comments will be kept in the same non-privileged portion of the confidential file. If that condition is not met, no action will be taken on the communication and the communication will not be included in the staff member's personnel file.

5. A third category of adverse material may relate to an appraisal of the staff member's performance and conduct. Under the existing system, all performance reports, special reports and other communications pertaining to the staff member's performance are a matter of record and are open to rebuttal by the staff member. The reports and the rebuttal, if any, as well as the final appraisal by the head of the department or office are placed in the official status file. This file constitutes the sole repository of documents relating to the contractual status and career of the staff member. It is available for inspection by the staff member once a year before the annual promotion review and in other circumstances specified in the administrative instruction ST/AI/108 on application to the staff member's personnel officer.

6. It is noted, however, that some organizational units, for their own convenience, maintain files on individual staff members which contain copies of documents in the official status file and correspondence internal to the organizational unit concerned. Such files may be kept only as working files for a limited period of time and shall not include any material reflecting unfavourably on a staff member's performance or conduct that has not been brought to his or her attention and communicated to the Office of Personnel Services.

7. The Office of Personnel Services at Headquarters or the personnel services at other duty stations, which bear the responsibility for the maintenance of personnel records, will monitor the implementation of the interim guidelines set out in this instruction.
