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Chairman: Mr. Sharma (Nepal)
*Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative
and Budgetary Questions:* Mr. Mselle

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Agenda item 118: Human resources management
(continued) (A/57/30, A/57/276 and A/57/293)

Composition of the Secretariat (A/56/512 and Corr. 1 and A/57/414; A/C.5/56/L.7 and A/C.5/57/L.3)

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Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (A/56/956 and Add. 1)

1. **Mr. Gansukh** (Mongolia) said that his delegation associated itself with the statement made by Venezuela on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. It supported the ongoing reform of human resources management, and noted the progress made with the ten key building blocks of that reform.

2. Although the General Assembly had adopted several resolutions on achieving geographical representation in the composition of the Secretariat, 16 countries were not represented at all and many others, including Mongolia, were underrepresented or were below the midpoint of their respective ranges. The Secretariat should give preference to those countries when recruiting staff.

3. National competitive examinations were an essential tool for recruiting qualified personnel and to ensure equitable geographical distribution. The number of countries participating in such examinations had increased, but the number of recruits joining the Secretariat through that expensive process remained low (only 87 in 2001) and many successful candidates

were placed on a waiting list or never given the opportunity to work for the Organization.

4. His delegation believed that further detailed studies were needed before any conclusions were drawn on the report of the Secretary-General on the mandatory age of separation (A/56/701) in order to avoid overlooking any possible negative impact on staff performance. In particular, because the average age of the staff was high, the issue of the career development of young professionals should also be taken into account.

5. **Mr. Acemah** (Uganda) said that his delegation associated itself with the statement made by Venezuela on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. It supported career appointments as the cornerstone of the international civil service. It favoured staff mobility at all levels as part of career development, and it requested the Secretary-General, in consultation with the staff representatives, to submit for consideration by the General Assembly new proposals regarding the G to P examination.

6. His delegation welcomed the appointment of an Ombudsman who would provide direct access to the Secretary-General and be a guarantor of the independence of the internal justice system. As the Ombudsman was also mandated to make recommendations aimed at improving the Organization, she should undertake a thorough review of the internal justice system as soon as possible in order to restore confidence in it.

7. His delegation endorsed the Secretary-General's conclusions in his report in document A/56/701, on the implications of raising the mandatory age of separation. That age should be fixed at 62 for all staff, a view that was supported by the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund and by the International Civil Service Commission. The staff of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund retired at 65, and other organizations in the common system had raised the mandatory age of separation as early as 1974. Noting improved living conditions, a number of countries had already abolished a mandatory retirement age. Retirement at 62 might also help to achieve gender balance, as it would be attractive to mothers who took up or resumed jobs with the Organization later in life.

8. Studies undertaken by the Office of Human Resources Management indicated that, because the numbers involved represented a very small proportion of the total staff, the implications of a change in the mandatory age of separation to 62 would be minimal,

and that such a decision should therefore not conflict with the rejuvenation of the Organization's staff.

9. A strong Office of Human Resources Management was essential if reform of the management of human resources was to produce long-term gains in efficiency.

10. **Ms. Afifi** (Morocco) said that she wished to associate herself with the statement made by the representative of Venezuela on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. She welcomed the considerable progress made in the reform of human resources management, although much still remained to be done. The reform should be seen as a tool which would make it possible to introduce a culture of efficiency while respecting cultural diversity and as a stimulus which would allow the Organization to attract and retain the best staff.

11. Her delegation welcomed the introduction of the new staff selection system and, in that regard, emphasized that staff should have guaranteed job stability and continuity. With regard to contractual arrangements, her delegation would like the Secretariat to submit definitive proposals and a comparative study of the various types of arrangements so that the General Assembly could take action in an informed manner. She would also like more details about the pre-selection process operated by the Office of Human Resources Management. With regard to the employment of consultants and temporary staff, she shared the view of the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC) that the principle of equitable geographical distribution must be respected. The employment of retirees should occur only on an exceptional basis, be justified by the need for skills in very specific areas and should not damage the career prospects of permanent staff. The Secretariat should be rejuvenated by means of efforts to retain younger staff.

12. She remained concerned about the high number of vacant posts in field offices in Africa and requested the Office of Human Resources Management to carry out a detailed study on the real reasons behind that situation and to propose measures to attract qualified staff to Africa.

13. She also noted with regret that gender parity had not been achieved in decision-making posts and that the proportion of women appointed to Professional or higher level posts was increasing very slowly, as stated in the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (A/56/956). In that connection, the priorities set out in the Beijing Platform for Action should be taken fully into account.

14. The Galaxy system should facilitate the application of the principle of equitable geographical distribution and transparency and ensure more rapid recruitment. In that connection, she would like the 120-day rule to be observed.

15. In her opinion, mobility — vertical and lateral — should fall within the framework of a global career development system and constitute an incentive which should provide the Organization with a competent and more versatile staff. It must respect well-defined criteria which guaranteed equity and must not be used as a form of punishment. Promotion should be based on objective, fair and transparent criteria and go hand in hand with high quality continuous learning.

16. The delegation of authority had a number of advantages because, in particular, it offered flexibility and promoted participation, but it should be accompanied by monitoring mechanisms. Any delegation of authority must be in accordance with the Charter, entail clear lines of authority and individual accountability and go hand in hand with enhanced administration of justice. In that connection, it was important to prevent the overlapping of skills and conflicts of interests, which could be harmful to the reform process.

17. With regard to the administration of justice, she endorsed the recommendations designed to strengthen the three mechanisms to handle complaints of discrimination described in the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (A/57/956). She welcomed the appointment of an Ombudsman, whose functions should be incorporated into the existing mechanisms.

18. **Mr. Eljy** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that he supported the statement made by the representative of Venezuela on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and took the view that the reform of human resources management should be geared towards a number of aims: improving contacts between staff and management; implementing a fair and global system of recruitment, promotion and mobility; ensuring equitable geographical distribution and adequate working conditions for staff; guaranteeing transparency in the delegation of authority and conferring greater accountability on the Professional staff to whom it was delegated; achieving gender parity; and improving the administration of justice. In no circumstances should the reform lead to budgetary or staff cuts.

19. He stressed that staff competencies had to be developed if the Organization's efficiency and overall results were to be improved. Lateral mobility could be

useful in that respect, provided that the eligibility rules were in conformity with the decisions of the legislative bodies. In particular, mobility should not negatively affect the quality and continuity of services. It must be applied equitably and should not lead to abuses.

20. His delegation took the view that reform could not take place without the cooperation of staff. In that connection, he recalled that under, *inter alia*, General Assembly resolution 53/221, management was bound to consult the staff representatives; it was regrettable that the Office of Human Resources Management had not respected that rule.

21. He was of the opinion that the new system of contractual arrangements lacked clarity and that it was difficult to see how it differed from the current system.

22. His delegation attached great importance to respect for the principle of equitable geographical representation, set forth in Article 101, paragraph 3, of the Charter. The number of Member States within the desirable range had increased while that of underrepresented Member States had decreased, but the goal had not yet been achieved. He called on all Member States to consider taking the system of desirable ranges more fully into account so that it would apply to a greater number of categories and levels of staff.

23. The system of delegation of authority was not yet accompanied by a general mechanism to monitor accountability, and the relevant provisions of General Assembly resolution 53/221 were not being sufficiently implemented. The delegation of authority, accountability and the administration of justice were three inseparable issues; he called for the establishment of a system for the administration of justice without delay or risks of arbitrariness which would make it possible to apply criteria compatible with the regulations of the International Labour Organization (ILO) and would be consistent with national systems.

24. The Galaxy system was an improvement, but the difficulties encountered by many developing countries in accessing the Internet and the fact that post vacancy announcements were not issued in all the official languages of the Organization — although they should be issued simultaneously — and were issued late deprived the nationals of many States of recruitment opportunities. In addition, post vacancy announcements were not transmitted in a timely manner to the permanent missions, in violation of General Assembly resolution 55/258, section IV. He welcomed the progress made in the use of information technologies at

the United Nations, but pointed out that, there as elsewhere, the instructions of the governing bodies must be obeyed.

25. The report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) on possible discrimination due to nationality, race, sex, religion and language in recruitment, promotion and placement (A/56/956) was not consistent with the provisions of General Assembly resolution 55/258 with regard to discrimination based on nationality or with those of General Assembly resolution 53/221, section IX, paragraph 4, which requested the Secretary-General to discontinue the practice of showing the representation of staff according to the major geographical groupings and to list countries in alphabetical order. He urged that a corrigendum should be issued in order to bring the report into line with those instructions.

26. **Mr. Herrera** (Mexico) said that in principle, his delegation endorsed any measures designed to improve the working conditions of the staff and to increase their productivity, two goals which were mutually compatible.

27. Two years after the adoption of the first set of human resources management reforms, the Secretary-General should submit a report on the achievements of that reform to the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session, as suggested in the report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) (A/57/469).

28. The equitable geographical representation of Member States on the Organization's staff was a priority for his Government. The current system of establishing desirable ranges was satisfactory; any change would result in a grater imbalance that would penalize countries with a small population. In that regard, he welcomed the holding of a national competitive recruitment examination in Mexico in 2003 and hoped that it would allow his country to reach midpoint in its desirable range.

29. With regard to the report of OIOS on possible discrimination due to nationality, race, sex, religion and language in recruitment, promotion and placement, he was not satisfied with the statement that the results of the analysis did not reveal a systematic and consistent pattern of preference or exclusion that impaired equal opportunity (A/56/956, summary). He noted with concern that some instances of discrimination had been observed and that the United Nations was not a model of gender parity.

30. **Mr. Zongo** (Burkina Faso) said that, despite technological progress, human resources remained essential to the Organization's existence and functioning. He welcomed the efforts that had been made to promote the Secretariat's recruitment of staff from developing countries, a process which might help to reduce the problem of underrepresented and unrepresented States. He also endorsed the Secretary-General's proposal that the mandatory age of separation should be raised from 60 to 62, especially as such a measure would have little effect on the Organization's population pyramid and would result in savings.

31. The United Nations must compete with other public and private employers in recruiting its staff; between 1 July 2001 and 30 June 2002, a total of 446 staff members, including 7 Directors and 240 Professional staff, had resigned. It was therefore necessary to focus on a number of guarantees and incentives during the recruitment process. In particular, employment contracts should combine flexibility with firmness in certain of their provisions since staff members who left before the end of their contracts unfortunately represented a loss of experience for the Organization. Coordinated decision-making, taking due account of the opinions of staff members on specific questions, could also help to improve the Organization's functioning. The recruitment process should be based on objective standards of competence and professionalism and should be non-discriminatory. It was also desirable to continue to improve the administration of justice and to promote multilingualism and gender parity within the Organization.

32. **Mr. Effah-Apenteng** (Ghana) said that he endorsed the statement made by the representative of Venezuela on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. His delegation supported the Secretary-General's efforts to attract and retain staff of the highest quality, in particular through an organization-wide review of the pay and benefits system and improved conditions of service. His delegation took note of the Secretary-General's report on possible discrimination (A/56/956 and Add.1), which it hoped would provide a basis for a zero-tolerance policy on such matters.

33. He expressed satisfaction with the progress made in meeting the staffing targets for underrepresented and unrepresented Member States, in particular the efforts made to appoint more women to posts at the senior policy-making level, but stressed the need for such efforts to continue. He also welcomed the measures

taken to prevent a top-heavy organizational structure. However, his delegation was unable to ascertain from the Secretary-General's report (A/57/414) the extent to which section X, paragraph 1, of General Assembly resolution 55/258 was being implemented. He would appreciate receiving a tabulation of how posts at the senior level had been filled since the adoption of that resolution in order to be certain that no national of a Member State had succeeded a national of the same State.

34. His delegation supported approval of the Secretary-General's request for authority to place staff members serving in his Executive Office in suitable vacancies in the Secretariat, provided that such placements were carried out in consultation with the receiving heads of department or office and that the relevant staff satisfied all the selection criteria. If such authority were granted, it would be advisable for the Secretary-General to report on the relevant cases every three years.

35. Regarding the monitoring capacity of the Office of Human Resources Management, his delegation favoured a results-oriented approach and further utilization of information technology, which should make it easier to delegate non-critical monitoring activities.

36. Concerning the employment of retired members of the language services, his delegation concurred with the recommendation of the Advisory Committee on the need to establish the ceiling in terms of the number of days (125 days a year) rather than the amount of remuneration, and to recruit retired staff from a wider geographical area, in particular through the use of remote interpretation and translation as a means of equalizing cost differentials.

37. His delegation endorsed the proposal that the mandatory age of separation should be raised from 60 to 62 years, especially as the Secretary-General's study indicated that that measure would have a negligible impact on concerns such as geographical distribution, gender balance or the age profile. Such a measure, which was already being applied by other common system organizations, appeared to have positive implications with regard to staff morale, the training of young professionals and the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund. However, it was necessary to preserve the acquired rights of staff members appointed before 1 January 1990 who wished to retire at the age of 60.

38. **Mr. Christensen** (Denmark), speaking on behalf of the European Union and the associated countries

Bulgaria, Cyprus, Hungary, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Turkey and, in addition, Liechtenstein, said that he wished to discuss the report of the Secretary-General on the composition of the Secretariat (A/57/414). The European Union took note, in particular, of the study of the ramifications of changing the relative weights of the population, membership and contribution factors, but noted with regret that the study, which had been requested by the General Assembly in resolution 55/258, was not exhaustive. Informal consultations on the matter should provide an opportunity to obtain further information from the Secretariat.

39. The Secretary-General's report indicated that certain States members of the European Union were underrepresented in the Secretariat. Measures should therefore be taken to ensure the equitable representation of all Member States. National competitive examinations could facilitate the recruitment of qualified candidates from underrepresented countries.

40. **Mr. Manczyk** (Poland) said that his delegation associated itself with the statement made by the representative of Denmark on behalf of the European Union. It welcomed the report of the Secretary-General on human resources management reform (A/57/293) and supported the proposal to strengthen the monitoring function of the Office of Human Resources Management while at the same time providing heads of departments with authority over personnel matters. That would obviously require the elimination of possible overlapping of responsibility and it would be important to ensure that the Office of Human Resources Management and individual managers were held accountable for the application of rules and procedures in the field of human resources management. In view of the assistance provided by electronic tools, he welcomed the introduction of the Galaxy system and hoped that its functioning would be evaluated in 2003.

41. He commended the Secretariat for its creative thinking at all stages of the human resources management reform process and for its efforts in that area. However, the record on improving the proportion of women appointed to senior-level posts was disappointing; the conclusions of the Office of Internal Oversight Services indicated that the targets for gender parity in the recruitment and promotion of men and women at the P-4 to D-2 levels were unlikely to be met without additional attention on the part of the Office of Human Resources Management. Concerning the

representation of Member States, the trend was positive as the number of underrepresented Member States had been reduced from 24 to 16 in the past five years. Overall, the reform process was off to a good start and should be continued.

42. **Mr. Niiya** (Japan) welcomed the reform measures taken by the Office of Human Resources Management. He attached great importance to the human resources action plan and urged heads of department to implement it steadily, monitored by the Office of Human Resources Management. He also welcomed the measures to increase staff mobility and hoped that their various components would be applied in a strict and uniform manner. In that connection, the managed reassignment of junior Professional staff should contribute greatly to promoting mobility and career development. Generic job profiles would make it easier to appoint staff on the basis of competencies rather than knowledge.

43. Rejuvenation of the Secretariat was a priority and he welcomed the measures which had already been taken to that end. In addition, the streamlining of rules and procedures, with which outstanding progress had already been made, would help to improve transparency in the area of human resources management.

44. He regretted that the Secretariat had not addressed the issue of the top-heavy nature of the Organization, as requested by the General Assembly in resolutions 51/241 and 56/253, although a substantial number of reclassifications had taken place. He was concerned about the limited number of entry-level posts, particularly at the P-2 level, which represented only 14 per cent of the total number of posts subject to geographical distribution.

45. The issue of the underrepresentation of certain Member States had not been duly addressed in the report of the Secretary-General on the composition of the Secretariat (A/57/414); it was hoped that the next report would be more comprehensive. The issue of changing the relative weights of the population, membership and contribution factors when calculating the desirable range should be carefully studied and was not currently an urgent priority. The Secretariat had made concerted efforts to achieve equitable geographical distribution, but there had been no significant improvement in the overall situation. Only 111 Japanese nationals occupied posts subject to geographical distribution, whereas the desirable range was from 256 to 356. Despite the General Assembly's

request, the report of the Secretary-General on human resources management reform (A/57/293) did not propose any solutions. His delegation therefore asked the Secretary-General to submit a more comprehensive report on the issue during the current session. It would also like information on the measures taken by the Secretariat to ensure more balanced geographical distribution in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. His delegation was satisfied with the information provided on the composition of mission staff but was concerned that, of 1,408 staff members at the Professional and higher level, only 5 were Japanese nationals. He requested the Secretariat to ensure that the principle of equitable geographical distribution was respected for that category of staff.

46. His delegation attached great importance to the national competitive examinations but wished to point out that decisions relating to one occupational group took longer than others; that had a negative effect on the appointment of staff through the examination. The number of P-2 posts, to which successful candidates from the national competitive examinations and the G to P examinations could be appointed, should be increased.

47. **Mr. Lamba** (Malawi) said that he wished to associate himself with the statement regarding the recruitment of Secretariat staff made by the representative of Venezuela on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. He was confident that the Secretariat would strive to appoint staff with the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity on as wide a geographical basis as possible. He remained concerned that 18 Member States were not represented in any United Nations services and 10 were underrepresented, while certain States were overrepresented. He appealed to other delegations to impress upon the Secretariat the need to rectify that imbalance. The level of posts as well as their number should be taken into consideration. In that connection, in 2001, Malawi had seven Professional staff members (all male) but the highest post occupied was at the P-5 level. The Secretariat should hold consultations with Governments when recruiting their nationals. However, the principle of equitable geographical distribution should not be applied to the detriment of the standards of quality and efficiency. For that reason, his delegation supported the efforts of the Secretary-General to improve the recruitment process through national competitive examinations.

48. Although the number of women occupying posts at the D-1 level or above had increased by 71 per cent

between 1997 and 2001, significant progress was still necessary in the area of gender balance in the Secretariat, in particular regarding senior and decision-making posts. Increasing the mandatory retirement age was problematic as it was a short-term solution to a long-standing problem. The real challenge, which was not currently being addressed, lay in attracting more young men and women to the Secretariat.

49. The new provisions relating to mobility and training were a positive step, provided that they were applied objectively and transparently.

50. The introduction of the Galaxy system and the use of electronic advertising methods would help to make the recruitment process more transparent and speedier, but it should not lead to the abolition of the traditional methods, as it was important to remember that the majority of those living in developing countries did not have access to information technology. Lastly, it was important to ensure that the staff-management consultation mechanism functioned properly in order to foster close cooperation between the parties.

51. **Mr. Kelapile** (Botswana) associated himself with the statement made by Venezuela on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. He appreciated the efforts being made by the Secretary-General to address the fact that some countries, like his own, were underrepresented in the Secretariat and urged him to make more systematic use of national competitive examinations as a tool for improving the situation in that regard. It was particularly important to increase the representation of developing countries, especially African countries, at the higher and decision-making levels. While his delegation appreciated the almost even overall gender balance in the Professional category, it was concerned about both the continuing gender inequality at the senior and higher levels and the extremely slow overall progress rate. He commended those departments that were taking measures to address that imbalance and urged others to emulate them.

52. There were many separations, many of them due to the lack of career prospects for young professionals and inadequate compensation. The Secretary-General rightly noted that the Organization needed a more competitive pay and benefits system. The International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) had considered that issue at its most recent session and his delegation was looking forward to its recommendations in that regard.

53. In his view, raising the mandatory age of separation of staff members appointed prior to 1 January 1990 from 60 to 62 would have the merit of treating all staff members equally. According to the report of the Secretary-General (A/56/701), raising the mandatory age to 62 would have a minimal impact on geographical distribution, gender balance and the rejuvenation of the Secretariat, but it would be a positive gain for the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund and would be consistent with the recommendations of ICSC and with the practices of other common system organizations. However, as suggested by the Advisory Committee, it was important to ensure that the acquired rights of those staff members who opted to retire at 60 were protected, and that the prerogative of the Secretary-General under staff regulation 9.5 was also preserved.

54. With regard to the engagement of consultants and individual contractors, the Organization was far from attaining equitable geographical representation. In a report on the subject (A/55/59), the Joint Inspection Unit had offered recommendations on how to improve the situation, but the Secretary-General had noted in his report to CPC at its forty-second session that their implementation raised difficulties. Recalling that the General Assembly had requested a solution to that problem nearly 30 years previously, he concurred with the Advisory Committee's view that the Secretary-General should hire more consultants and individual contractors from developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

55. In its report on possible discrimination due to nationality, race, sex, religion and language in recruitment, promotion and placement (A/56/956), the Office of Internal Oversight Services stated that it had not found any systematic and consistent pattern of preference or exclusion that impaired equal opportunities for staff in the Secretariat. However, his delegation took seriously the isolated real or perceived allegations of discrimination and welcomed the declared commitment by the Secretary-General not to tolerate such practices in the Organization. It urged the Secretary-General to use all the mechanisms at his disposal to render equal administration of justice to all staff. In that regard, the appointment of an Ombudsman was very timely. Lastly, he welcomed the reports of the Secretary-General on human resources management reform (A/57/293) and on monitoring capacity in the Office of Human Resources Management (A/57/276).

56. **Ms. Silot Bravo** (Cuba) said that she associated herself with the statement made on behalf of the Group

of 77 and China with respect to human resources management. She had taken note of the reports of the Secretary-General on the follow-up to General Assembly resolution 55/258 and would have liked them to contain more precise and balanced information on the different elements of the package of measures adopted by the Assembly. Like the Advisory Committee, she was of the view that the Secretary-General should provide more detailed information on achievements resulting from the human resources management reform in order to help Member States to decide on the next phase of the process.

57. Referring to the report on the composition of the Secretariat (A/57/414), she said that the current method for determining the system of desirable ranges was probably the best. The Committee should therefore not spend too much time on considering changes to the relative weights of the factors used. With regard to geographical distribution, it would be useful to have not only general information on the whole Secretariat, but also a detailed department-by-department analysis.

58. Her delegation had noted with satisfaction the information contained in the report on human resources management reform (A/57/293). However, it would have liked the section on mobility to have put more emphasis on the implementation of the provisions of resolution 55/258 concerning the establishment of incentives for mobility between duty stations and the difference between such mobility and lateral mobility, especially with respect to promotions. For the purposes of results-based management, it would have been useful to have had an evaluation of the impact of the changes made, especially with regard to the recruitment process. It would also have been useful to keep delegations informed about the progress achieved in the reform of the administration of justice.

59. The report on the delegation of authority would allow Member States to consider further the steps taken to introduce a system of accountability for staff members. In that regard, specific action might be considered under the performance assessment system. It would also probably be useful if the internal and external oversight bodies were to assess more thoroughly the different aspects of human resources management reform. The General Assembly should use the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on discrimination as a basis for exploring measures that needed to be taken to remedy the shortcomings observed. She noted, in conclusion, that effective human resources management required extensive consultations with staff representatives.

60. **Ms. Udo** (Nigeria) supported the statement made on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. She commended the Secretary-General for the determination with which he had undertaken to apply the General Assembly's directives on human resources management. However, she agreed with the Advisory Committee that he should provide more information on the progress made as a result of the reform. She took note of the efforts made to improve the situation of underrepresented or unrepresented countries and emphasized that it was important to make progress at all levels, including decision-making posts.

61. While acknowledging the potentially positive effects of the staff rejuvenation policy, she pointed out that care should be taken to ensure the necessary continuity and to avoid demoralizing the staff. She agreed with the representatives of Uganda, Ghana and Botswana that the mandatory age of separation should be fixed at 62 for all staff members, as was the case in other United Nations bodies. Lastly, she noted with concern that the method for determining desirable ranges did not allow adequate consideration to be given to such important factors as population, contribution to peacekeeping and international security. That issue would be discussed during informal consultations.

62. **Ms. Thomas** (Jamaica) said she supported the statement made by Venezuela on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. The human resources of any organization were one of its most valuable assets. In his report on the strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change (A/57/387) the Secretary-General had outlined various proposals for encouraging mobility, expanding the opportunities open to General Service staff, helping staff members to balance their professional and private lives and rejuvenating the Organization. She hoped that the reform would enable the Organization to attract and retain staff of the highest quality.

63. With reference to the report of the Secretary-General on human resources management reform (A/57/293), her delegation welcomed the successes in implementing resolution A/55/258, particularly the improvement in conditions of service, the administration of justice, recruitment, mobility, career development and training. Her delegation also took note of the complementary measures recommended by ICSC concerning revised job classification systems, broad banding of post levels and increased flexibility in mobility. Her country viewed the ICSC recommendations as forward-thinking, and would support the pilot study on broad banding.

64. Her delegation welcomed the new Galaxy staff selection system that was expected to address the current weaknesses in the system, the most critical being the lack of transparency. However, the success of the system depended to a large extent on the accountability of managers, since an automated device facilitated but did not replace the decision-making process. She looked forward to the findings of the comprehensive report on the functioning of the new system which was to be submitted to the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session, at the request of the Advisory Committee, and she hoped that an interim report would be submitted to the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session.

65. Her delegation had long advocated the need for a clear career development path for both Professional and General Service staff. It therefore welcomed the measures to encourage mobility and the efforts to reduce classification steps and enhance opportunities for promotion, but believed that it was important to avoid losing the institutional memory. Lateral movements within the Organization were an effective means of broadening skills and deploying staff members where they were most effective. It was, however, vital at the same time to provide more opportunities for training and measures to promote fairness.

66. Her delegation concurred with the view that the United Nations should create more opportunity and incentives to make the careers of General Service staff more rewarding. Given that the G to P examination was the only means of promotion from the General Service category to the Professional category, her delegation welcomed the proposal that the percentage of P-1 and P-2 posts allocated for the purpose should be increased from 10 to 25 per cent. Alternatives to that examination were to be presented to the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session.

67. Although permanent contracts were a cornerstone of the international civil service, her delegation understood the rationale for the use of continuing contracts. The implementation of continuing contracts should nonetheless be buttressed by a fair and objective system of performance assessment.

68. Gender equality was of critical concern to her delegation, and it was disappointed that progress was slow and that the report on possible discrimination due to nationality, race, sex, religion and language in recruitment, promotion and placement (A/56/956) had found disparities at the higher levels, particularly in the

P-4 to D-2 levels. Her delegation also supported the recommendation of the Office for Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) that attention should be given to recruiting and promoting women at those levels and countering the rising separation rate of women from the Organization. It also supported the recommendation of OIOS that managers should be held accountable for meeting gender targets.

69. **Mr. Farid** (Saudi Arabia) said he supported the statement made by the representative of Venezuela. He congratulated the Office of Human Resources Management on the introduction of the Galaxy system, which should increase transparency and facilitate recruitment. He was pleased to note that, from 1 January 2003, all United Nations staff members would be known as “international civil servants”. He recommended maintaining length of service as a criterion for promotion and said that candidates recruited from other United Nations bodies should be placed at their previous grade or higher. Recruitment procedures should be the same for Professional and General Service staff. Staff on peacekeeping missions should receive a hardship allowance. Before consultants were hired, it should first be ascertained whether the Secretariat already had staff with the relevant experience and qualifications. Consultants should also be recruited from a wider range of countries. His delegation supported the Secretary-General’s recommendation concerning the strengthening of the Staff Counsellor’s Office of the Secretariat. The delegation of authority should be subject to monitoring and a well-established system to enforce accountability.

70. **Mr. Bouheddou** (Algeria) endorsed the statement made by the representative of Venezuela on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. He recalled that, in resolution 55/258, the General Assembly had referred to the slowness of the system for the administration of justice. It had taken note of the observation of the Advisory Committee that there was a gap between the statutes of the United Nations Administrative Tribunal and the Administrative Tribunal of the International Labour Organization with respect to two major issues and had requested the Secretary-General to take the appropriate measures to close that gap. However, the Secretary-General’s report made no mention of that point. The General Assembly had also requested the Secretary-General to establish a clear linkage between the administration of justice and the system of accountability when the decisions of the Administrative Tribunal resulted in losses to the Organization due to management irregularities. In

addition, it had requested him to take urgent measures to recover financial losses caused to the Organization by wrongful actions or gross negligence of senior officials of the United Nations, but the report had also failed to provide any information on the follow-up to that resolution.

71. **The Chairman** said that, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 35/213 and the decision taken by the Fifth Committee at its 13th meeting, he wished to give the floor to the President of the Federation of International Civil Servants’ Associations (FICSA).

72. **Mr. Basaran** (President of the Federation of International Civil Servants’ Associations) said he was speaking on behalf of 30,000 staff members of 23 agencies, programmes and funds in the United Nations system. Although the Secretary-General’s report (A/57/293) focused on human resources management within the Secretariat, the recommended measures would have an impact on staff in other United Nations entities. He had taken note with interest of the remarks made to the Fifth Committee by the President of the Staff Union. FICSA itself attached a great deal of importance to a number of issues (accountability and responsibility, transparency, equity, fairness, the speedy administration of justice, job security, a safe working environment, the capacity to develop and adapt, and the ability to be proactive, futuristic and visionary) and stressed that staff could both contribute to and benefit from the discussion on reform.

73. The Federation wished to continue playing an active part in the decision-making process and hoped that the existing partnership which linked it to the organizations would be strengthened. There was a need for reciprocal understanding between staff members and their employers. Employers must provide competitive and equitable employment conditions and ensure equal opportunities. Staff members would like to have a say in matters relating to their employment conditions.

74. The appointment of the Ombudsman would contribute to improving the administration of justice, conflict management and staff grievance resolution. Several FICSA member associations were subject to the United Nations Staff Rules and Regulations, and two other members had recognized the jurisdiction of the United Nations Administrative Tribunal. Consequently, FICSA was very keen to promote the adoption of best practices for both the United Nations

Administrative Tribunal and the International Labour Organization Administrative Tribunal.

75. The Federation congratulated the Secretary-General on his report on the strengthening of the United Nations and, in particular, on the proposals it contained relating to recruitment, promotion and mobility. The Federation had taken part in the discussions held by the International Civil Service Commission on the salaries and benefits review and its views had been taken into account.

76. However, FICSA was concerned about the reluctance of staff members to become staff representatives, the alleged breaches of the right of association and the deterioration of relations between management and staff in a number of organizations. For that reason, it urged the Fifth Committee to reaffirm the fundamental nature of staff representatives' rights, the importance of their role and the benefits of dialogue for employers.

77. He also pointed out that hazard pay had been denied to staff in the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, who were working in the field under extremely difficult and hazardous conditions, while it had been granted to other United Nations staff members who were working under similar or less demanding conditions. The Federation opposed such an injustice, and requested that the situation should be resolved as a matter of urgency.

78. Having closely followed the implementation of staff reduction, decentralization and reform measures in several United Nations organizations and aware of the complex nature of those processes, FICSA stressed the need to attribute due importance to the human factor. Lastly, FICSA and its member associations were finding it difficult to participate meaningfully in the staff-management consultation process since the related costs were met almost exclusively by voluntary contributions from staff. It had requested financial support from the executive heads and would be grateful if the Fifth Committee would endorse that request.

79. **Ms. Salim** (Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management) thanked the representatives for their encouraging words. She reaffirmed that the Secretary-General remained determined to recruit more nationals of unrepresented or underrepresented States. That issue and other aspects of human resources management would be taken up with delegations in the informal consultations, at which point she would respond in detail to Member

States' questions, inter alia that posed by the representative of Morocco relating to vacancy announcements which arrived at the permanent missions after the application deadline had passed. In that connection, she wished to point out that that problem did not exist for online vacancy announcements: nationals of 171 Member States had already submitted applications through the Galaxy system.

80. **Mr. Tan** (Office of Internal Oversight Services) said that the question put by the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic regarding the publication of a corrigendum would be answered during the informal consultations.

81. **The Chairman** said that, if there was no objection, he would consider that the Committee had concluded its general debate on agenda item 118.

82. *It was so decided*

Agenda item 113: Programme planning (continued)

(A/57/6 (Prog.1 and Corr.1, 2, 3, 5, 7-19 and 24-26), A/57/16, A/57/62, A/57/68; A/C.5/57/12, A/C.5/57/17, A/C.5/57/19 and A/C.5/57/20)

83. **Mr. Christiansen** (Denmark), speaking on behalf of the European Union, the associated countries Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Turkey, and, in addition, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, said that the medium-term plan was an essential programming tool and that the Secretary-General's proposal to change its timing, length and frequency merited careful consideration.

84. The European Union endorsed the proposed revisions to the medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005. The changes contained in the report of the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC) were designed to bring the plan up-to-date and to align it with key legislative mandates, particularly the Millennium Declaration. He trusted that the spirit of cooperation that had led CPC to agree on nearly all the proposed revisions would also guide the Committee in finalizing the revisions to the outstanding elements of the plan. The European Union would examine carefully the documents relating to the new and revised subprogrammes on financing for development, sustainable development and Africa.

85. He endorsed the recommendations designed to strengthen the role of evaluation findings, which were based on the report of the Office of Internal Oversight

Services (OIOS) (A/57/68), and supported the proposal that OIOS should focus on one annual in-depth evaluation and prepare a cross-cutting, thematic evaluation of a priority area of the Organization. He also supported the idea of providing greater assistance to departments and offices so that they could carry out self-evaluations.

86. The quantitative information contained in the report of the Secretary-General on programme performance for the biennium 2000-2001 (A/57/62) would help the Secretariat to assess the performance of programme managers; he supported the recommendations of CPC in that regard. The use of results-based budgeting would shift the focus of the programme performance report for the current biennium from a quantitative to a qualitative approach; that would prove more useful in judging whether programmes were achieving their desired outcomes and determining whether low implementation rates represented failure on the part of programme managers or justifiable termination of low-priority or redundant work.

87. In the light of the responsibility of programme managers for the monitoring process, they should be adequately trained. The expansion of the Integrated Monitoring and Documentation Information System (IMDIS) would allow monitoring and evaluation to be carried out on a day-to-day basis. He hoped that the Secretariat would implement the recommendation of CPC that compliance with monitoring requirements should be made a standard component of performance appraisals for managers.

88. **Mr. Atsavapranee** (Thailand) provided statistics to demonstrate the importance of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) in a heavily populated and impoverished region. At its fifty-eighth session, in May 2002, ESCAP had decided on a new conference structure that would enhance its effectiveness by focusing on three key areas — poverty reduction, managing globalization and addressing emerging social issues — which were aligned with the Millennium Declaration. It had also decided to revise its seven subprogrammes accordingly. The proposed revisions to the medium-term plan which it had approved had been submitted to CPC at its forty-second session; some of the changes recommended by CPC in its report went beyond the mandate of ESCAP. His delegation would therefore propose, during the informal consultations, a few amendments intended to bring the CPC report closer to the proposed medium-term plan adopted by ESCAP at its fifty-eighth session.

89. **Mr. El Gammal** (Egypt) said that, generally speaking, he endorsed the recommendations of CPC. However, he had reservations regarding the wording of the report, which, in many places, was contrary to the procedures adopted by CPC at its thirty-eighth to forty-first sessions; he cited various examples taken from paragraphs 204, 233 and 240 to 249. Since resources were limited, he would not call for the issuance of a revised version of the report; however, he proposed that comments on the matter should be included in the Committee's draft resolution.

90. **Ms. Buergo Rodríguez** (Cuba) said that she endorsed the recommendations of CPC and that its report would greatly facilitate the Committee's work. The review of certain programmes was still pending; inter alia, the Secretariat had yet to submit proposals reflecting the conclusions of the International Conference on Financing for Development and the World Summit on Sustainable Development. She awaited with interest the conclusions of the other main Committees to which CPC had decided to send recommendations and the conclusions of the Committee on Conferences on its consideration of the in-depth evaluation of the Division of General Assembly and Economic and Social Council Affairs. Lastly, she supported the comments made by the representative of Egypt and would return to that matter in the informal consultations.

91. **Ms. Ebbesen** (United States of America) said that she endorsed the conclusions and recommendations of CPC and supported the proposal that the Committee should postpone consideration of document A/C.5/57/19 until the Second Committee had considered the report on the outcome of the International Conference on Financing for Development and the General Assembly had taken a decision on procedures for the intergovernmental review of the follow-up to conferences.

92. **Mr. Kelapile** (Botswana) said that delegations' response to the report of CPC amounted to a genuine vote of confidence in that body. The mistakes in form noted by the representative of Egypt, which could be attributed to a lack of time, should be corrected. The portion of the report devoted to the report of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) on strengthening the investigations function in the United Nations system organizations (A/56/282), in particular, paragraph 358 on the training of managers involved in investigative activities, deserved close consideration by the General Assembly. Overall, his delegation endorsed the report of CPC.

93. **Mr. Othman** (Joint Inspection Unit) said that investigations of United Nations bodies did not deal only with cases of fraud or corruption but with all types of unsatisfactory conduct, as enumerated in annex IV to the report of JIU.

94. Except in the case of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the World Health Organization (WHO), the responsibility for investigations never lay with a single internal body and the division of tasks among the relevant bodies was not always very clear.

95. The Joint Inspection Unit considered that since the participation of managers in investigations was a reality, efforts should be made to minimize the dangers of that practice, of which he gave examples. The inspectors had come to the conclusion that the individuals in question should receive training in the Uniform Standards for Investigations adopted by the Third Conference of International Investigators of United Nations Organization and Multilateral Financial Investigations.

96. **Mr. Farid** (Saudi Arabia) said that the participation of managers in investigations was contrary to all the principles of sound management. Investigations should be conducted by the Organization's trained investigators and the functions of managers and investigators should be completely separate from one another. He planned to submit a draft text on that matter to the Committee.

97. **Mr. Mazet** (Chairman of the Committee for Programme and Coordination), replying to the representative of Egypt, said that only CPC could decide to amend or suspend the implementation of the decisions it had adopted on its procedures and methods of work. It was not for the Committee to take such a decision. The Committee for Programme and Coordination had adopted its report by consensus.

98. **Mr. Tootoonchian** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the success of the work of CPC was proof of its usefulness. His delegation endorsed the report of CPC as a whole.

99. **Mr. El Gammal** (Egypt) said that he had only wished to point out the contradiction between the content of paragraph 361 of the report of CPC and the practice followed by that body.

100. **The Chairman** said that, if he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee had concluded its general debate on agenda item 113.

101. *It was so decided.*

Organization of work

102. **The Chairman** announced that, during Ramadan, the afternoon meetings would be held not from 2.30 p.m. to 5.30 p.m., as previously announced, but from 3 p.m. to 5.30 p.m.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.