



FIFTH COMMITTEE REPORT

6-10 NOVEMBER 2006

During the week of November 6-10, the Fifth Committee held meetings on an Economic Commission for Africa, the UN Financial Situation, and the UN Pension Fund. Informal consultations continued on Human Resources Management. Please find below a summary of the issues presented and raised.

HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

INFORMAL CONSULTATIONS ON HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

Document

"Investing in People" A/61/255, 9 August 2006, proposals for a new Human Resources framework.

Informal Consultations, chaired by Mr. Morteza Mirmohammad of the Islamic Republic of Iran, offered an opportunity for Member States to ask clarifications from Ms. Jan Beagle, Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources and staff of the Secretariat's Office of Human Resources Management on several items contained in "Investing in people" (A/61/255)

Mobility

Background

The mobility of staff is essential to creating a more versatile, multi-skilled and experienced international civil service capable of fulfilling both the standing requirements of Headquarters programmes and the complex mandates of field activities. A mobility policy was introduced in 2002 to be implemented in May of 2007, which called for the stimulation of the mobility of 100 series staff in order to assist in career development and ensure that posts in all duty stations would be filled with experienced and skilled staff. This is not enough, however, because it limits the Organization's ability to utilize the experience and skills of large numbers of staff. Also, the restrictions on the number of staff who may serve in peace operations challenge the ability to staff peacekeeping missions. Furthermore, the Organization will continue to address work/life issues that impede mobility, and the Office of Human Resources will give priority consideration to staff who have served in hardship and/or non-family duty stations. It will also continue to provide career counseling and job search assistance for dual career couples.

The Secretariat reportedly explained to Member States that today the organization needs people to be able to work between agencies. Thus we want to encourage mobility with people that have acquired experience across the organization

Movements between finance, human resources and political affairs are extremely important for the organization. We need to have people that have worked in different departments. Mobility gives staff experience in different occupational groups and multidisciplinary

experience is highly valued. Young people look for organizations as an opportunity for growth and development and our package includes more movement and career development. More emphasis will be placed on the conditions of service and, in general, we offer more conducive conditions for young people to join the organization. Our package contains several positive elements and in particular it offers the ability to plan careers with the help of the organization. Many of our staff are now on fixed term contracts but, according to our experience, 5 year contracts are more appealing than fixed term contracts. Personnel can be moved on a transfer or on a loan, which will depend on inter-agency agreements.

Questions raised by Member States included:

What is the selection process? Who decides which staff is to participate to the mobility programme?

The majority of international posts is part of the mobility programme and only a very limited number of positions will not be subject to mobility.

What will be the costs of mobility to the organization?

We can provide Member States with indicative costs of movement from duty stations but we cannot say at this stage what the additional costs of transferring personnel will be. Nevertheless, the benefits to the organization will override the costs.

In terms of voluntary mobility versus mandatory mobility, will voluntary mobility not be sufficient to ensure the necessary degree of mobility for the organization?

When it comes to the use of voluntary mobility programs to ensure adequate mobility within the organization, voluntary mobility still needs to be managed. Staff cannot expect to just go wherever they want, whenever they want. Mobility needs to be organized according to the necessities of the organization. We do make an effort to try to find the best matches possible, but the organization's interests are more important.

What incentives have been prepared for staff that participates to the programme?

We will make it appealing in terms of career development; mobility will be a necessary condition for promotion.

What groundwork has been done for communicating to the staff how and when the mobility policy will be enacted?

We are communicating with staff now so that they are aware of what it is expected from them. We will be publicizing the compendium as well as what positions are available. We are also planning to organize different types of training and offer e-learning tools in order to facilitate the transition.

Will not mobility complicate the system of promotion? Staff will be moved to higher/lower positions or will simply remain to the same level?

There are no promotions in the managed mobility scheme. Mobility will be lateral and a necessary condition for promotion.

In case of dual career families, how do you make sure that giving spouses more opportunities to find work at duty stations does not interfere with issues of neutrality and immunity?

We are planning to deal with the problem of dual careers and employment of spouses and its interference with issues of neutrality, we are working closely with the Office of Legal Affairs (OLA) in this regard and we will provide Member States with an update on the implementation of this issue in collaboration with OLA.

What obstacles have been met to date?

One of the obstacles met has been in the efforts made to create better conditions for dual career couples. It has been very difficult to obtain work permits for our staff's spouses in some countries and this factor constitutes an impediment to mobility.

What will be done to prevent loss of knowledge management? In case of high mobility and job limits that do not go beyond 5 years, when experienced personnel moves to a different capacity don't you lose something in terms of knowledge management?

Working in different departments should not be of negative influence to the general knowledge management but should instead represent an advantage for the organization. There are knowledge management exercises being put in place and we have many resources available to carry on this exercise.

Is mobility reciprocal?

The mobility exercise is not a one-way exercise. Its scope is to try to ensure that all different duty stations work both ways.

What is the rationale behind the allocation of 2500 posts from the Secretariat to Peacekeeping? How will that system work?

The rationale behind the 2500 additional posts to be allocated to the peacekeeping missions is recruiting and retaining a baseline capacity for peacekeeping. In the case of these 2500 posts, recruiting will be based on peacekeeping capacity. Recruitment of new personnel usually takes up to two months and it is not suitable for cases in which 72 hours rapid deployment is needed. These 2500 additional posts will also fulfill the necessity of having personnel familiar with the organization to work in peacekeeping.

Find an exhaustive list of Q&A at: www.centerforunreform/node/218

Career Development and Training

Background

The investment the Organization makes in recruiting the highest caliber of talent from around the world must be matched by a commensurate investment in further developing and retaining that talent. Focus should be on providing entry-level professionals with systematic developmental opportunities to enhance their career satisfaction and their value to the Organization. Furthermore, there will be online training of the UN Development program, and next year, at

least one development program will be done.

In response to questions from Member States, the Secretariat reportedly provided the following answers:

How is the training organized? What language training is available? Is there local language training?

The training is done in-house, but the majority of training is outsourced. We do train the trainers to ensure overall coherence in the training and to ensure our standards. Linguistic training in the field is in the six official languages of the UN. In the case of Sudan, we did provide local language training.

What kind of training is provided to new staff in the 6-9 months after entry of duty?

New staff members spend one week in New York for a general orientation. They are introduced to a large variety of staff, they receive conflict management training, training on E pass and they will also be assigned a mentor for one year. After this, they follow courses depending on their responsibilities. These courses include supervisory skills and management training. More details will be provided later.

Why is it sometimes hard for staff members to get training – are there waiting lists? What are the procedures, who determines who will get training, management or the individual staff member? How do you establish what each department/section receives and for what kind of training?

On a yearly basis, departments do an analysis of what kind of training they need which they present to us. We then evaluate the needs and allocate a budget which we monitor. Management decides which staff members will receive the training.

How do you assess the impact of the training?

We distribute questionnaires and also do phone and email follow-up.

Shouldn't there be mandatory training when a P3 is promoted to a P4 position?

We periodically alert P5s about management training.

The Secretariat will provide a written response on the question of the minimal requirements for optional and required training.

In the discussions on procurement reform, \$800,000 was requested for training of procurement staff. How will it be organized? What kind of division of labor will there be between Human Resources and the substantive department.

We will work closely with UN Procurement Service and ensure that there is no duplication.

How is the division of labor generally?

For centrally coordinated programs, the training is mostly done by outside experts. In case of substantive or technical training, we work closely with the relevant department.

Is staff trained on development issues? Will you be providing training on the complex reform process?

It is part of the training on core values. There will also be online training of the UN Development program. Next year, we could possibly do at least one development program.

Can you provide us with details on the training programs of the last four years?

The Secretariat will provide these details with the caveat that for training away from HQ for this year, we may not have the details available right now. Geneva, for instance, only sends us reports on their training once a year.

What about the virtual academy – will they have academic value? Will staff be given credits for them that they can use in other learning settings? What bodies will certify and according to what standards?

We will collaborate with existing institutions/universities. It will be like Open University but with a broader and more complex focus that ties into the work at the UN. Whether credit will be provided depends on the level of cooperation with universities. At this time we cannot say if there will be certification – it is not one of the primary aims.

Contractual Arrangements

Background

It was proposed that to simplify contractual arrangements, three types of appointments (short-term, fixed-term, and continuing) will be used and will substantially reduce the administrative load, reduce administrative errors, and be more fair to staff in the field. This will allow for greater equity and enhance transparency, and will change the period for those in the field to two years instead of one year for temporary contracts.

The Secretariat explained that the proposal to simplify contractual arrangements by using only three types of appointments (short-term, fixed-term and continuing) will substantially reduce the administrative load, reduce administrative errors, and be more fair to staff in the field. Questions reportedly included:

How does this proposal compare to last year's – what are the changes and why?

To attract people for field positions, we have to resolve the issue of entitlements in non-family duty stations. We are exploring options to have family in a nearby location. The proposal will allow for greater equity and enhanced transparency. The new proposal will give people the same contract, wherever they are based, the only difference being the length of the contract. The period for those in the field will be increased from one year to two years for temporary contracts. All staff will have to go through the same competitive entry. Right now, staff has difficulties understanding the different contracts. The proposal also allows for making extensions more easily so that when the new payroll comes around, people do not have to wait for their last salary because the paperwork wasn't finished on time. Also, sick leave entitlements now vary among the different contracts. The expected impact of the new proposal will be reduced vacancy rates and reduced turnover rates.

Could you not have dedicated people in human resources deal with either the 100 or 300 series?

We do not have the resources to have staff be dedicated to the different contracts.

We have difficulties understanding the different contracts as well – can you provide us with a mock contract, showing the differences between the 100, 200 and 300 series?

Will be provided

How does the proposal relate to the framework proposed by the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC)?

The proposal is fully aligned with the ICSC framework.

What will happen with the existing permanent contracts or those that now can expect permanent contracts? Won't you have two different systems running at the same time?

Jurisprudence will ensure that those now eligible for permanent contracts should remain eligible to be considered for a permanent contract.

Is there a possibility of appeal, can you contest a ruling?

There is always the possibility of appeal – we will follow up on this.

The proposal is mostly to deal with the unfairness of the 300 series/peacekeeping contracts. How many people are we talking about? Are we changing the whole system for 1100 people? Can you provide us with statistics of turnover rates both in the HQ and the field? How many people have 1 year contracts or less?

Right now, roughly 80% of staff have contracts of one year or less. Exact figures will be provided, also on the turnover rates. Right now, we have over 5,000 staff in the field.

Can temporary contracts become fixed-term contracts? The process for temporary contracts is faster, the jobs are not advertised but they cannot be extended?

A temporary contract can become a fixed-term contract, but the staff member will have to go through a competitive process. Ideally, every staffer goes through a competitive process, but in case of surge requirements, we need people quickly and with experience. We use our rosters for these.

Can some of the work by temporary staff not be done by contractors?

The issue is the danger coverage for contractors.

As to mobility – the conditions in the field are not the same so can it be fair? What elements should be in place at the field mission for it be fair? Will host country agreements be organized so that spouses can work?

Answers will be provided in writing

How will the new system be managed at its introduction? We will have a period with two systems at place at the same time – will this not create complications? The Claims Review Board is a very time consuming process – will this not be bad for peacekeeping operations? As to mobility, do contracts go with people or with posts?

Answers will be provided

Harmonization of Conditions of Service

Background

The Secretariat will continue to streamline administration through the adoption of the lump-sum options wherever possible, and the practices of the UN funds and programmes with respect to travel and shipment will be taken into account

In response to questions from Member States, the Secretariat reportedly provided the following answers:

In regards to the administrative burden that the Secretariat will be bearing to implement the process of harmonization, how will it take? Six months? How long will it take instead for the classification of family versus non family duty stations?

The process of harmonization, which entails reprogramming the Integrated Management Information System (IMIS) will be streamlined along the civilian staff. The Secretariat will not be taking the burden of implementing the whole process alone.

The speed of the classification of family and non-family duty stations will depend on the present classification of the station and its location: security, medical facilities and other factors need to be taken into consideration while some stations will need to be approached as special operations stations. We estimate that it should take from 6 weeks to 4 months and it will be a process conducted intra-agencies. One part of the review will be conducted in November and further review will continue in July.

How many calendar days will it take for the personnel to move to their duty stations?

The total time for preparation will depend on the travel time. It will go from a minimum of 2 days to 3 or more for the furthest duty stations. In addition to the days of traveling we should also consider that we plan to give staff 5 days rest upon arrival.

What are the lump-sum options mentioned in paragraph 284 of A/61/255. Are these meant to be a substitute for entitlements?

The lump-sum option does not replace the entitlements. In a similar way of happens already with travel arrangements, we would like to expand that system to other entitlements. The idea here would be to give staff the option to choose between having the organization arrange for example the shipping of personal effects, education for children and other entitlements or if they prefer to receive a lump-sum and provide for their own arrangements, for example they might decide to spend the money in buying furniture in the duty station instead of having their personal effects shipped.

Building Leadership and Management Capacity

Background

More rigorous and systematic approaches to selection at the Under-Secretary-General, Assistant Secretary-General and Director levels, including for peace operations, will be established. Also certain functions and positions require senior specialists who do not necessarily have the desire or the aptitude to assume managerial responsibilities, and so as to recognize the value of these individuals, a “substantive career track” will be introduced as an alternative to the managerial track up to the Director level. Furthermore, senior staff will have the opportunity to participate in inter-agency programmes such as the Senior Management Network Leadership Development Programme. Candidates with high potential for managerial positions would be offered specific developmental assignments, training, mentoring and the opportunity to be assessed for future managerial openings. Also, concerted efforts will be made to develop female leaders in order to increase the number of women in management and leadership functions. Finally, managers are responsible for implementing their individual yearly performance management plans and are accountable for managing the performance of their staff and creating an environment conducive to the professional development of their staff.

The Chair of the Informal Consultations, Mr. Mirmohammad, noted that for the implementation of this item Member States were not requested to take any particular action. The Secretariat reportedly provided the following answers to the questions raised by Member States:

With respect to the “proactive headhunting” mentioned in paragraph 316, will that be part of the tasks for the recruitment center? How will transparency for this process be guaranteed? In the selection and recruitment of leadership, how do you plan to approach the selection? How will the current practices be affected?

In terms of the selection of leaders and senior level management positions, the Organization needs to make sure that we have the best managers at senior level. We need to establish a rigorous outreach process to ensure that the availability of positions reaches the most suitable candidates. We also need to ensure that there is clarity in job terms.

The Secretariat also explained that, as far as the issue of transparency in the recruitment of higher level positions is concerned, there is a greater degree of transparency in filling senior positions that there was five years ago. There has been an increase in the broad circulation of available positions, and there is greater outreach. An important factor in increasing transparency in the process is to make clear the competencies that are sought, as well as the evaluation criteria. The intention is to continue to broaden the outreach and clarity in advertisement of the positions in order to reach qualified candidates. The new Recruitment Center will implement the outreach process and advertising, but the final decisions on recruitment will be taken by the SG.

With respect to increasing the number of women in senior level management posts, how would you achieve these results?

Currently, women already enjoy equal access to general leadership training in the organization. In addition, we also have a special training program for women at D1 and D2 levels and we would like to be able to expand the program also to women at P4 and P5 levels.

With reference to the fact that representation of developing countries at most senior levels seems to have been declining since 2002, are there proposals to increase the participation of developing countries? Is there a ceiling for senior level positions to guarantee that some countries cannot have more than a certain number of Under Secretary Generals (USG)? What measures have been implemented to date by the Secretariat to ensure representation at USG and above? And, on a broader level, has OHRM thought of using mobility to address representation?

There is no ceiling at Assistant Secretary General (ASG) or Under Secretary General level (USG).

Mobility is, indeed, a valuable way to provide a shifting of geographical representation between different departments but in order to change the overall geographical representation of the Secretariat we need to recruit new personnel.

Until recently there was indication to “avoid” the recruitment of over-represented countries but now it seems that indication have changed to “reduce to the extent possible” recruitment of over-represented countries. Is this correct?

Yes, the indication now is to “reduce to the extent possible” the recruitment of over-represented countries.

How does the 360° feedback programme work? What staff does it involve?

The 360° feedback programme is currently run with P4, P5, D1 and D2. This program is only delivered for P4 and above, but we do require staff to provide feedback at all levels. 360° feedbacks are confidential. Managers will not know who amongst their supervisees made which comments. They will, instead, know what the comments of their supervisors were.

How does the performance appraisal system work? What are the incentives and disincentives?

With respect to the performance appraisal system, Human Resources has five levels of grading. In 2005, the majority of staff members graded at three (50%), 40% of staff members graded at two and the remaining at one. We do not have incentives, but a certain % of income will be retained when staff repeatedly fail to perform at acceptable levels.

What do you mean by substantial career track? How do you ensure that access to the track will not be discriminatory? Will access be merit based? How will you make sure that developing countries will be given access? Is there not a risk that it could become some sort of hidden track?

With respect to the substantive career track, this path is meant for officials who are highly specialized in particular areas, such as health. This track is slightly different from the administrative track. The idea is to provide training for management above P5 level. We tried to take into consideration that specialized staff do not always want to become managers. If they desire to go up to D1/D2 levels we can provide management training.

Evaluation of who will be participating in the training in the substantive career track would be done by the departments in consultation with human resources and it will be limited to a small number of officers in the beginning.

How have you been ensuring accountability of managers? In regards to non- performance of management, how long do you tolerate non-performance?

OHRM communicates the results of their inquiries on the performance of managers with a list of corrective measures suggested. The message is then received by senior management that the authority delegated to them in the area of human resources is being watched closely.

Will it not be possible to develop specific training for managers from developing countries so that they can also be able to apply for senior level positions?

Can you give us a clear idea on proposals on how to strengthen the capacity of the staff? Who decides who can be a good candidate to receive managerial training and thus move to managerial jobs?

Clarification is needed on how the grading of the evaluation of performance is conducted. Does not it have quite a lot of elements of subjectivity? How does staff address unfair evaluations?

Buyout

Background

Under the voluntary phase of the buyout programme, a staff member's request would have to be endorsed by the head of department or office and the Office of Human Resources Management and approved by the Under-Secretary-General for Management on behalf of the Secretary-General. The staff member would then receive compensation as a lump-sum payment, however, when warranted and possible, the Organization could offer a customized package that would allow the staff member to remain on special leave with full or partial pay or without pay for pension and medical insurance purposes or other compelling reasons. These packages would not exceed the amount that would normally be granted under the lump-sum option. The size of the voluntary buyout would depend on the amount appropriated for that purpose, but it is estimated that an individual package would average \$100,000.

The Secretariat reportedly provided the following answers to the questions raised by Member States:

Buyout is a controversial issue. We are trying to understand the rationale of the proposal: is it standard practice already? It is clear by now that Mandate Review will not be a reason for sending people to retire, we have not cut any single program and thus, what is your fundamental reason for buyout?

The purpose of the voluntary buyout is to be more responsive to requests of early separation. Some staff may have become disinterested in the Organization while others might have difficulties responding positively to the changes that will be made in future and in particular to the mobility program. Requests for buyouts will have to be endorsed by the head of the department and the head of management. We did not propose the buyout programme with the mandate review in mind. Mandate Review is still an ongoing process and we will provide solutions to its outcomes in due time.

Computation for buyout was done in accordance with provisions of staff regulation which allow the SG to increase the termination indemnity to 50% to ensure that there is no litigation afterwards.

Was any review done of the staff buyout effectuated in 1995-1996? How effective was that program? With regards to the proposed three years period for which staff will not be able to seek employment, why now do you propose 3 years when before it was 4 years? How will you be able to monitor that staff does not become employed again before the end of the 3 years period?

We do not have statistical data on the effectiveness of the previous buyout program, but there is great interest in it from those who meet the conditions.

Staff will not be able to provide the necessary documentation to be hired by agencies, even as consultants. Early termination should be in the interest of the Organization, it does not make sense to rehire staff that has been on the buyout program shortly, but in our experience we have found that in the cases of those rehired it was in the interest of the Organization to rehire them before the span of four years is up.

Are people able to negotiate with management? Is there a monitoring arrangement for this exercise?

Comprehensive answers to questions raised by Member States during the Informal Consultations of November 7th and 9th will be provided in writing by the Secretariat on November 14, 2006.

NOVEMBER 10, 2006

GENERAL DISCUSSIONS

Summary of Statements made available at the meeting. Find a more comprehensive summary of statements at: Fifth Committee Press Releases - DPI November 10, 2006

Finland spoke on behalf of the European Union and stated that it had some concerns with issues raised by the Board of Auditors and the ACABQ. These issues included: the lax performance monitoring by the Investment Management Service, the deficiencies in the trade order management system and the yet unfilled positions on risk management and compliance in the Investment Management Service. They concluded by stating that “it is critical for the Audit Committee to be composed of members with the highest standards of expertise in accounting, financial management, including risk management and audit.”

South Africa spoke on behalf of the G-77 and China and stated that they believed that the Fund should further efforts to invest in developing countries. Also, despite huge sums of Fund assets, a small team of managers has been given the responsibility to oversee them, which South Africa believes presents a high risk to the Organization. Also, they believe it would be prudent to clarify the delegation of authority from the Secretary-General, as the sole custodian of the Fund, to his “Special Representative” to conduct business on behalf of the Secretary-General. They also sought the clarification on a number of issues, particularly why responsibilities have not been assigned to a team of first-rate managers. There was also a major concern by the fact that due to a lack of staff in the Risk and Compliance Section of the Investment Management Service (IMS), the Fund suffered a loss of \$8.7 million, and they are also concerned by the fact that no accountability mechanism seems to have been in place to ensure that disciplinary action is taken against the individual responsible for this loss. Furthermore, they registered their concern at the conduct of the Representative of the Secretary-General, in this case the Under-Secretary-General for Management, who took the decision to work out a new formulation for the Fund’s strategic asset allocation and its performance benchmark without consulting the relevant parties. They believed this to be improper to disregard established procedures and to make such decisions without due consultation.

The United States opposes the Board’s decision to send the Fund’s Chief Executive Office to find out more about the plight of the UN’s “economically disadvantaged” retirees and says that since the General Assembly will not approve any benefit improvements until benefit reductions were fully restored, such a trip is a waste of the Fund’s resources. Also, the U.S. does not understand why the Board was not responsive to the General Assembly’s request in A/RES/57/286 for proposals that would result in a more equitable distribution of seats on the Board by a reallocation of seats to more fairly reflect the current participant rates, it also said that the Board’s statements that it will review the matter again in three years and produce a policy paper addressing membership issues next year are unacceptable. The United States would also like to know how the Board has assured itself that the Audit Committee members are “experts” in the appropriate fields pursuant to the terms of reference and if the Audit Committee members have circulated their resumes among Board members. Furthermore, in the interest of transparency, it is appropriate that Member States have full and adequate access to audit and oversight information.

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