



Center for UN REFORM Education

Promoting Discussion of Ways to Improve the United Nations System

Fifth Committee Report No. 7

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*From December 4th to December 8th the Fifth Committee met for general discussions on Financing for Missions in the Cote d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, and Eritrea, as well as on the Capital Master Plan. Informal consultations continued concerning the draft resolution on human resources management reform. The following is a summary of issues raised with respect to **mobility, career development and support, contractual arrangements and harmonization of conditions of service.***

HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT REFORM

INFORMAL CONSULTATIONS

MOBILITY

With regards to **mobility policy**, Member States expressed substantially different views on how, and to what extent, such policy should be implemented. No decisions were made with respect to mobility, as Member States required further clarifications by the Secretariat.

Reportedly, the **Russian Federation** seemed reticent to the proposal suggesting that the Secretariat was never given an explicit mandate to implement a system of mandatory mobility across the organization and requested that OHRM provide more detailed proposals on how voluntary mobility would fit in the framework of career development. Doubts were expressed with regards to the fact that the Secretariat has not provided sufficient information on how many people will be mobilized and the costs related to such an endeavor, which makes it difficult for Member States to endorse such a policy.

The **G77 and China** also expressed concern that the GA has never endorsed a Secretariat's system-wide mandate for mobility policy, and to do so, Member States will need more information on its implementation, which is why all of these reports and data are being requested. Also, the Group expressed concerns that mobility might infringe on the rights of staff and suggested that such cases should be addressed within the framework of the administration of justice system.

Ms. Jan Beagle, Assistant Secretary General at the Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM), explained to Member States that during the past five years, OHRM has been putting down the building blocks for managed mobility, always taking into account all resolutions adopted by Member States in this regard. There has already been a system in place for mobility since 2002, but next year the execution phase will commence. Only then will the Secretariat be in a position to report on its implementation.

The **EU** expressed its support for the Secretary-General's proposals on the implementation of managed mobility policy and asked the Secretariat to remind Member States of the benefits of such a policy in addressing high vacancy rates.

Ms. Donna Maxfield, Chief of Personnel Management Services at the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, explained to Member States that with a 22-26% average vacancy rate in DPKO, the department realized that they need to be able to move staff around and from this premise, came the Secretary-General's proposal to consider peacekeeping as one of the core activities of the Secretariat. Mobility would then be a key strategy to rely on experienced staff coming from the Secretariat. Ms. Beagle added that the main rationale behind such a policy would be to have an integrated Secretariat taking into account the needs of peacekeeping.

With respect to the effectiveness of mobility policy in addressing high vacancy rates, the **G77 and China** requested that the Secretariat provide a cost-benefit analysis of their proposals on mobility, but the **US** expressed doubt on the usefulness of a cost-benefit analysis approach to account for a decrease in high vacancy rates.

Ms. Beagle explained that, to date, it has not been possible to see the usefulness, or lack thereof, of managed mobility because implementation will not begin until next year. Nonetheless, she confirmed that the main reason to implement managed mobility is to address the problem of stations with high vacancy rates. Specific measures have been formulated in order to establish if this has been achieved, but the Secretariat will not be able to provide Member States with such information until 2007.

With respect to the additional resources proposed for approval by the EU, **Japan**, reportedly, was reluctant to grant approval, as per [ACABQ recommendation](#), until more detailed proposals on how additional resources will be employed are brought forward.

The G77 and China confirmed that it is too early in the process to talk about resources and concurred that, since, for the time being, it is not clear if there is a mobility policy in place, the Group is also not willing to endorse additional resources.

Finally, Member States expressed perplexity concerning the fact that mobility policy is being addressed in different ways throughout the resolution: managed mobility or reassignment program. In particular, **CANZ** strongly recommended that Member States decide on a single formula to be used to address mobility policy throughout the resolution in order to avoid confusion at a latter time. **The G77 and China** (with the support of the **Russian Federation**) reiterated that the GA has not endorsed mobility policy as a comprehensive package. Currently, it is too fragmented and it is necessary to make it clear where these policies started, which is the reason why Member States are confused at this juncture. There needs to be more clarification of what is being discussed.

The Chairman of the Informal Consultations, **Mr. Morteza Mirmohammad** of the **Islamic Republic of Iran**, suggested that he be given time to devise a formula to address mobility policy that all Member States find acceptable and suggested that the section regarding mobility should not be addressed until this fundamental point is agreed upon.

CAREER DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT

Member States also expressed different approaches with respect to **career development and support**.

Reportedly **Japan**, supported by the **Russian Federation**, expressed concerns that increased investment on training of internal staff could hinder access of external candidates. It stated that doubling the budget for training would have a great impact on the Organization and that such an impact should be taken into consideration. Therefore, it suggested that a better strategy plan should be put forward by the Secretariat before allocating any additional resources

The **US** and **CANZ** reportedly stated that they do not see a connection between better training for existing staff and continued inflow of external candidates to the Organization. The two concepts do not exclude each other and are both equally healthy for the organization. The **EU** asked the Secretariat whether OHRM had thought of any strategy plan to ensure that training is not detrimental to adequate employment of external candidates.

With regards to additional training resources, Member States asked for clarifications from the Secretariat on how training resources are dispensed within the organization.

Ms. Beagle explained that the entirety of the training budget is allocated at the Office of Human Resources Management and then dispensed across the Organization. Resources can be allocated to programs, departments, or duty stations as the needed. In principle, the way the training budget is currently administered is a mixture of centrally organized programs and training programs organized at department/duty stations level.

The G77 and China reportedly gave their full support to the Secretary General's proposals in regards to career development and support, and in particular, expressed their desire that the resolution stress that training should be available to all staff without discrimination. The **US** observed that stressing such a fact would not be necessary in

the resolution since this is the way the UN is supposed to operate. The **EU** added that mentioning that training should be available without discrimination would entail implying that currently there is discrimination.

The G77 and China asked the Secretariat to provide Member States with information on what training had been offered to what personnel on the basis of their nationalities so as to ensure that there had not been discrimination in the past. The **US** objected and said that even if provided with such data, it would not necessarily provide a fair picture and account for favoritism of certain groups over others.

Ms. Beagle stated that the Secretariat can certainly provide information on what training was provided to what staff but could not do so on the basis of nationality because data related to training is not recollected on the basis of the nationality of personnel. The information pertaining to staff is not kept on the basis of nationality. Also, the OHRM IT system is outdated and there is no system-wide data system, therefore, every time data is entered, it needs to be integrated from all different duty stations.

The **EU** stated that UN staff is international staff and it should be treated as such without distinctions based on their nationalities.

The **G77** noted with concern that the lack of information on training on the basis of nationality is a major flaw in the Organization's human resources system and that Member States should consider including in the current resolution that data on training should be available based on nationality as well. Keeping data on the basis of staff nationality would not undermine the international character of civil servants and it is the only way the Secretariat can prepare to meet geographical targets. Geographical status is one of the factors to be considered for recruitment, as per UN Charter, and Member States need to be able to obtain such data also in regards to training.

CANZ noted that if in fact there are instances of discrimination, they should be addressed within the administration of justice system and not by the current resolution.

CONTRACTUAL ARRANGEMENTS

Reportedly, with respect to the Secretary General's proposal to streamline UN contracts, the **G77** proposed to reconsider the issue of contractual arrangements at the resumed session, and asked the International Civil Service Commission to submit its recommendations for the General Assembly to take action.

The **EU** explained that, in their view, the ICSC has exhausted its work on contractual arrangements and has already commented on the issue in the past. The proposals of the Secretary General fit into the framework previously established by the ICSC. It is not the role of the ICSC to comment on the Secretary General's proposals and make suggestions to Member States because that is the role of ACABQ. Thus, the **EU** does not see a role for the ICSC here and agrees with the contractual arrangements proposed by the Secretary General.

The **Russian Federation** declared that dismantling two series of contractual arrangements is a serious issue and definitely something the ICSC should consider. Art. 16 of the ICSC terms of reference establish that the ICSC has a wide mandate to consider any human resources management issue. Another reason to wait before making any decisions on this matter is that the Secretariat did not give any concrete estimates of how much this would cost the Organization.

Japan also suggested that Member States should wait until the resumed session before making any decisions on contractual arrangements. Contractual arrangements are a critical issue which is related to regulations of conditions of service and Member States should wait to hear the views of the ICSC Commissioners.

The **EU** reportedly stated that from their point of view, the Secretariat has adequately addressed some of the major concerns expressed in regards to adopting the contractual arrangements proposals, such as costs and uncertainties for staff, and that is why the Union agrees with the Secretary General's proposals. The Organization needs a better and more equitable system based on the equal remuneration for equal work principle.

Japan remarked that, to date, the system has been using the three series contracts and it cannot really be said that it is not equal. Changing the balance now will have a great impact on the staff across the whole Organization. In

principle, the idea to have fixed/continuing and short term contracts is acceptable, but the dismantlement of the 200 and 300 series will have a great administrative impact throughout the entire common system.

The **EU** replied that the Secretariat has also given plenty of reasons to stop using the three series contracts because it is a waste of administrative resources. The ICSC agrees with the concept of streamlining the contractual arrangements although with minor changes. As for the implications that the streamlining will have for the common system, it should be noted that not all arrangements will be changing across the whole organization. When the 300 series was introduced, peacekeeping was different from what it developed into today. Peacekeeping then was temporary, but now we know that peacekeeping will be a function that the UN will have to perform for longer than expected – it is estimated, for at least 20 more years. This makes the 300 series contracts, introduced for peacekeeping, no longer valid. The EU asked the Secretariat to assess the urgency of the matter.

Ms. Beagle explained that the different series existing at present no longer meet the operational needs of the Organization. Many departments across the Organization already use only one series or two. We need to dismantle the three series because of equity, but also for administrative simplicity.

Ms. Maxfield reiterated that the Secretary General's proposal is not advocating an overarching change, but rather to institutionalize arrangements used for decades. The SG is not proposing to change the conditions of service in the field for non-family duty stations (which make 93% of all duty stations).

The **G77** underlined the fact that Member States' different approaches of the issue are due to different assumptions. Member States need more time to analyze this issue and its consequences because any decision taken will affect the entire system.

HARMONIZATION OF CONDITIONS OF SERVICE

With respect to harmonization of the conditions of service, the Chairman of the Informal Consultations, **Mr. Morteza Mirmohammad** of the Islamic Republic of Iran reportedly suggested that Member States should concur on the approach they would like to take.

The **Russian Federation** proposed that Member States revert to discussing the issue during the resumed session in light of the comments by the ICSC, as these are linked to the issue of contractual arrangements.

Japan also stated that they look forward to hearing the ICSC recommendations and would also like to receive a more detailed report from the Secretariat on how to address the issue, its financial implications, and geographical distribution implications.

The **G77** also reportedly declared that the group feels no decisions can be made now and that Member States should wait and address the issue at the resumed session.

The **EU** reportedly stated that Member States could begin by making a decision regarding the approval of the 2500 civilian peacekeeper positions because no direct additional costs need to be approved and this decision will contribute to professionalizing peacekeeping. Peacekeeping missions are temporary, but peacekeeping as a concept will be a function of the UN for at least 2 more decades.

The **G77** reportedly, affirmed that the Group does not agree with the concept of professionalizing peacekeeping. Peacekeeping is temporary and should not be professionalized. The reforms regarding harmonization of service, contractual arrangements and the 2500 civilian peacekeepers belong to the same package and cannot be decided separately.

Ms. Maxfield intervened in support of the 2500 civilian peacekeepers program explaining that the 2500 civilian peacekeepers figure is based on the fact that peacekeeping never had any less than 2600 staff. This figure will be under constant review and we will adjust it if we realize that the figure should be decreased. Nevertheless, currently, peacekeeping staff numbers 7000, and according to our estimates, peacekeeping in the immediate future is only likely to increase. We recognize that peacekeeping is a shifting field but looking at the occupational groups trends for the next five years, we do not see a drastic decrease based on trends of staff.

Japan also stated that Member States cannot foresee how peacekeeping will change in the future. If Member States accept to create these 2500 civilian peacekeepers positions, we will have to keep all of these people until retirement. We need to take into account future fluctuations and the related financial implications.

Ms. Maxfield explained that the 2500 civilian peacekeepers are needed because the rapid deployment capacity system that is currently being used does not really work with the roster system. At present, peacekeeping positions do not offer any job security, we are trying to improve that but certainly do not intend to make these positions “a job for life.”

The **G77** stated that the group is still hopeful that peacekeeping is a function that the UN will not have to perform for much longer. De facto the structure is already there and if we are planning to legitimize it then we would like to have sufficient time to look at it carefully.

GENERAL DISCUSSIONS

[DPI Report: BUDGET COMMITTEE CONCLUDES DEBATE ON CAPITAL MASTER PLAN](#), December 4th, 2006

[DPI Report: BUDGET COMMITTEE RECOMMENDS ADJUSTMENTS TO FINANCING FOR MISSIONS IN CÔTE D'IVOIRE, ETHIOPIA AND ERITREA](#) December 7, 2006

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