



## General Assembly

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Agenda item 134

### Administrative and budgetary aspects of the financing of the United Nations peacekeeping operations

## Greater use of national staff in field missions

### Report of the Secretary General\*

#### *Summary*

The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 57/290 B of 18 June 2003, which requests the Secretary-General to encourage greater use of national staff, as defined in paragraph 80 of the report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, whenever possible and cost-effective.

The report outlines the policy governing the use of national professional officers in field missions, recalls the background of that practice and describes the officers' current deployment in peacekeeping operations.

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\* The lateness of the report submission is caused by the strain put on the limited resources of the Personnel Management and Support Service by the ongoing surge in planning and deployment of new peacekeeping missions.

## **I. Introduction**

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 57/290 B (para. 17), which requests the Secretary-General to encourage greater use of national staff in peacekeeping operations.

2. For the purposes of the report, the term “national staff” is used to denote national professional officers (NPOs) and national general service staff. The report recalls the policy governing the use of NPOs in field missions, the current status in the use of national staff in general and the way forward for an efficient use of national staff in field missions.

## **II. Policy governing the use of national professional officers in field missions**

3. The use of national professional officers is governed by specific criteria approved by the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC), which were outlined in annex VI of the ICSC 1994 report (A/49/30) and adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 49/223 of 23 December 1994. The policy stipulates, in particular, that NPOs should be nationals of the country where they are to serve and should not be subject to assignment to any duty station outside those countries.

4. The use of staff in the NPO category is limited to functions which have a national content and which require national experience and knowledge of local culture, language traditions and institutions (see A/49/30, annex VI). The report specifically indicates that NPOs should be employed in accordance with the stated criteria and not merely as a convenient substitute for international professionals. (Ibid., para. 235).

5. The use of NPOs was approved by the Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM); subsequently, on 23 December 2003, authority was delegated to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) to recruit NPOs in governance-oriented missions. The greater use of NPOs in governance missions was considered both necessary and desirable in view of the expanded field of activities entrusted to those missions, which require national experience and local knowledge. OHRM noted that the recruitment of NPOs by DPKO should be carried out in accordance with the criteria approved by the ICSC and endorsed by the General Assembly.

## **III. Background and recent developments**

6. As at January 2004, a total of 9,231 national posts had been approved and established in peacekeeping and other field missions. That number includes both NPO posts (306) and national general services posts (8,925).

7. National general service staff are represented in all components of every mission, encompassing the political and other substantive components and all the administrative and logistical areas. They are recruited as secretaries, administrative assistants, technicians, transport or information technology assistants and public information or language assistants.

8. In 1995 NPOs were first employed in the United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala (MINUGUA) as human rights officers. Two years later NPO positions were established in the United Nations Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina (UNMIBH) in connection with the Judicial System Assessment Project and later on in the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), whose mandate in governance and public administration was particularly suited for the use of national expertise.

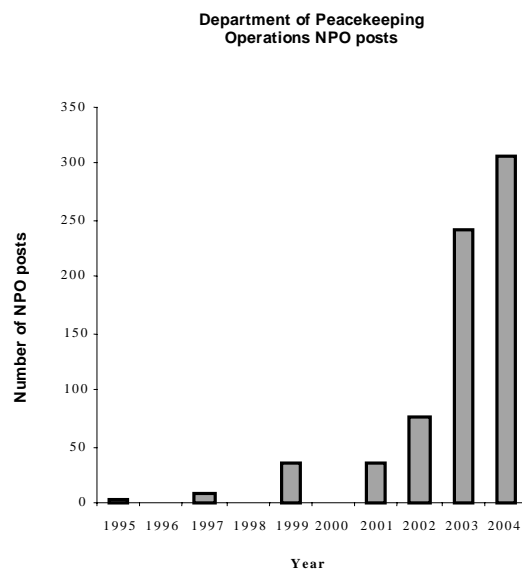
9. Depending on circumstances particular to the specific mission, every effort is made to include as many national posts as possible. The scope and magnitude of the national component is subject to the availability of locally qualified and skilled personnel and, in the case of NPOs, to the number of posts that require national experience and local knowledge as well as to such factors as confidentiality and possible conflicts of interest. The particular circumstances are usually considered during the technical assessment missions.

10. Within the overall framework of the national staff, NPOs stand as a distinct category of staff, as evidenced by the policy governing their recruitment and the limitations attached to the areas where they can be employed.

11. The employment of national staff, including NPOs, was expanded with the establishment of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). The staff, with their knowledge of local culture, language traditions and institutions, provide key support in the implementation of the mission's mandate. For example, within the political affairs sector, national staff have been deployed in teams to each of the eight regions of the country to assist international political and civil affairs officers in maintaining contacts at the district and local levels. The increased utilization of national staff also serves the goal of strengthening national capacity and development, providing national staff with the opportunity to contribute directly to reconciliation, recovery and reconstruction efforts.

#### **IV. Current status**

12. As at January 2004, DPKO data, shown below, indicated that 306 national professional officer posts had been authorized in eight peacekeeping and special political missions: the United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala, the United Nations Mission in Côte d'Ivoire, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq, the United Nations Special Coordinator in the Occupied Territories, the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the United Nations Mission in Liberia.



## V. Conclusion

13. Overall, the experience of using national staff in the various missions has been positive. Feedback received from field missions indicates that NPOs have generally produced high quality work in their area of competence. Their knowledge of local institutions, culture and language has proved especially helpful. The staff is of high calibre, and they are well-educated, experienced and professional. For example, the impact of the national indigenous officers in Guatemala was particularly valuable, precisely because they came from an ethnic background similar to that of the population groups with whom they worked. All missions that currently have NPOs have indicated their interest in maintaining and expanding this particular expertise. Some missions, however, have encountered difficulties in identifying suitable national staff as a result of United Nations language requirements. For example, the number of national applicants for NPO posts at the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) was limited, as knowledge of one of the working languages of the United Nations was required.

14. The number and quality of national staff in field missions at both the professional and general service levels is testimony to the commitment of the Organization and of DPKO in particular to support and spearhead the greater use of these categories of staff. The greater use of NPOs in peacekeeping operations is limited by the conditions governing their employment, namely the requirement that their use be restricted to functions which have a national content and which require national experience and knowledge. However, within that framework, it has been possible to increase significantly the use of NPOs in such missions as UNMIK and UNAMA, where there has been a demand for national expertise and local knowledge. In staffing missions in the future, DPKO will use the experience gained at UNMIK and UNAMA to expand the use of NPOs where feasible and cost-effective.

15. The Office of Human Resources Management and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations are closely monitoring the use of national professional

officers within the framework of the delegation of authority mentioned in paragraph 5. The currently applied criteria (see paragraph 4) may be further reviewed with OHRM and other partners as relevant to allow the Secretariat, and DPKO in particular, to be in a better position to develop flexible and creative staffing strategies in order to expand the use of NPOs in field missions.

## **VI. Action to be taken by the General Assembly**

16. **The General Assembly is requested to take note of the report.**
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