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**Human resources management****Human resources management reform****Report of the Secretary-General****Addendum****Improving gender distribution in the Secretariat***Summary*

The present addendum to the report of the Secretary-General on human resources management reform (A/59/263) is presented pursuant to section II, paragraph 41, of General Assembly resolution 57/305 of 15 April 2003 on human resources management. It should be read in conjunction with the above-mentioned report, as well as the reports of the Secretary-General on the composition of the Secretariat (A/59/299) and on the improvement of the status of women in the United Nations system (A/59/357).

The present document identifies a number of factors affecting progress towards the goal of 50/50 gender distribution in the Secretariat and presents proposed actions to contribute to the attainment of that goal.

The General Assembly is invited to take note of the report, including the actions that the Secretary-General intends to initiate.

## **I. Introduction**

1. In section II, paragraph 41, of its resolution 57/305 of 15 April 2003, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General, in the light of ongoing concern about the underrepresentation of women in the United Nations, especially at senior levels, to undertake a comprehensive review of progress made towards the goal of 50/50 gender distribution, including, inter alia, the factors affecting progress, and to submit proposals to improve gender representation, particularly in offices in which women are underrepresented, to the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session.

2. Pursuant to resolution 57/305, the present addendum to the report of the Secretary-General on human resources management identifies factors affecting progress towards the 50/50 goal based on experience gained and feedback received, and contains proposals for actions to accelerate the process. The addendum should be read in conjunction with the above-mentioned report and two other reports of the Secretary-General, on the composition of the Secretariat (A/59/299) and on improvement of the status of women in the United Nations system (A/59/357) respectively, which provide statistical and other information on gender as at 30 June 2004.

3. In preparing the report of the Secretary-General on improvement of the status of women in the United Nations system, the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women collaborated very closely with the Office of Human Resources Management, which is the primary source of human resources statistics and other related information. In addition, pursuant to paragraph 5 (h) of Assembly resolution 58/144 of 22 December 2003, the Office of the Special Adviser, conducted a research-based analysis of the probable causes of the slow advancement in the improvement of the status of women in the United Nations system and presented its findings in that report.

4. To the extent possible, in order to avoid duplication, the present addendum does not include information contained in the above-mentioned three reports. Instead, cross-references are made to their relevant sections or paragraphs.

## **II. Goal of gender balance in the Secretariat**

### **A. Background and recent developments**

5. The goal of reaching 50/50 gender distribution in all categories of posts has been reaffirmed repeatedly by the General Assembly, most recently in section II, paragraph 39, of resolution 57/305 and paragraph 3 of resolution 58/144.

6. As at 30 June 2004, women comprised 37.4 per cent of staff in the Professional and higher categories with appointments of one year or more. This is a 1.7 per cent increase over the previous year, the highest annual change since 1998 (see A/59/299 and A/59/357 for more details).

7. Women accounted for 42.5 per cent of recruitments into the Professional category between 1 July 2003 and 30 June 2004 and 37.7 per cent of recruitments at the Director level. During the same period, women staff members accounted for 47.2 per cent of promotions at the Professional level and 47.5 per cent at the Director level. The Secretary-General is committed to making continued

improvement in the recruitment and promotion of women and to ensuring that the progress achieved will not be eroded by the separation from the Organization of women staff members. This is of particular importance in the next five years (2004-2008), when one of every three retirements in the Professional and higher categories and more than one of every two in the General Service and related categories will be that of a female staff member. Hence, recruitment at higher than replacement level is necessary to accelerate progress towards gender parity. The next five years is an opportune time to increase recruitment of women candidates, as 14.6 per cent (1,689 staff members) of the current workforce (697 from the Professional and higher categories and 992 from the General Service and related categories) is expected to reach retirement age.

8. It is worth noting that the goal of gender parity has been achieved at the junior Professional level and in the General Service category. As at 30 June 2004, 50.8 per cent of staff at the P-2 level were women and 62.1 per cent were in the General Service category.

9. Efforts contributing to the improvement of gender distribution have focused on increasing the number of women recruited, promoted and placed; raising gender sensitivity among programme managers as well as the staff at large; providing appropriate work/life policies to attract and retain staff, particularly women; enhancing career development opportunities for all staff; and establishing mechanisms to monitor progress towards the achievement of the gender parity goal.

10. Earlier measures to improve gender balance in the Secretariat have included the promulgation of a Secretary-General's bulletin on promotion of equal treatment of men and women in the Secretariat and prevention of sexual harassment (ST/SGB/253 dated 29 October 1992) and an administrative instruction on special measures for the achievement of gender equality (ST/AI/412 dated 5 January 1996, which was subsequently revised and issued as ST/AI/1999/9 dated 21 September 1999); the creation, in 1988, of the post of Focal Point for Women in the Secretariat; implementation of the strategic plan for the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat (1995-2000); and the establishment, in 1997, of the post of Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women. In addition, national competitive recruitment examinations and the G to P examinations have proven to be useful means of improving gender representation.

11. Several key initiatives introduced recently under the current human resources management reform programme contain features or provisions that seek to contribute to the improvement of gender distribution in the Secretariat. They include the human resources action plans, the staff selection system, work/life policies, performance management, career development programmes and gender sensitivity training.

12. Human resources action plans, which are established jointly by heads of departments and offices and the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management, contain specific targets, including on representation of women, taking into account the requirements of Article 101.3 of the Charter of the United Nations. One target is the selection of women for at least 50 per cent of vacancies resulting from retirements, new posts, as well as posts vacated for other reasons, in order to reach gender balance in all categories of staff. Twenty departments or offices met this target in the previous planning cycle (2001-2002). A target introduced in the current human resources planning cycle (2003-2004) requires heads of departments

and offices where gender parity has not been achieved to make every effort to increase female representation in all categories of staff. Those departments and offices are to reach and maintain an average annual increase of at least 2 per cent for female staff in the Professional and higher categories (see also A/59/263, sect. III.A, and A/59/357, paras. 74 and 75).

13. Under the staff selection system introduced in 2002, heads of departments and offices are accountable to the Secretary-General for progress made towards achieving the targets for geography and gender balance set out in the departmental human resources action plans. They are held directly accountable also to the Secretary-General through their annual programme management plans. Heads of departments and offices are required to certify that they have taken into account the Organization's human resources objectives and targets, including gender, as reflected in their departmental action plans. The facility for certification is provided in Galaxy, the electronic support tool of the selection system.

14. The staff selection system contains a special provision that will enable women at the P-3 or L-3 and P-4 or L-4 levels who have been in the service of the Organization for a cumulative period of at least one year, accrued over the two years immediately preceding their application to a vacancy, to be considered at the same time with internal candidates. Such women staff members who hold a current appointment of any type at the P-3 or L-3 level may be considered for vacancies at the P-4 level, and those at the P-4 or L-4 level may be considered for vacancies at the P-4 or P-5 level. This provision is also applicable to women serving with other entities in the United Nations common system.

15. Candidates endorsed by central review bodies for a particular vacancy, but not selected for it, and who have indicated an interest in being considered for a future vacancy with similar functions, are placed on a roster. Placement of women candidates on the roster will assist programme managers in the expeditious identification of qualified women candidates. As at 30 June 2004, 40 per cent of candidates on the roster at the Professional and higher categories were women.

16. Monitoring is essential to assess progress and to make the necessary adjustments to reach and maintain gender balance. It is undertaken at several levels, including through reporting to the General Assembly, providing on-site monitoring and ongoing consultation, and advising and supporting departments (see A/59/263, sect. IV.B). On-site monitoring has been particularly useful for sensitizing field missions and departments on areas of corporate responsibility, including gender issues. Electronic tools are being developed to provide programme managers with ready access to up-to-date information necessary for decision-making and to facilitate monitoring of gender and geography targets set in the departmental human resources action plans. Such tools will also help in the online preparation, presentation, monitoring and reporting of such plans.

17. Work/life policies are important for the creation of a gender-sensitive work environment and in helping staff to balance their professional and private lives. In that connection several work/life policies have been introduced recently. Positive experiences were reported by departments and offices that implemented the flexible working arrangements, introduced Secretariatwide in 2003 (see A/59/263, para. 131 and A/59/357, paras. 86 and 87). Participants in the programme represent all categories of staff, ranging from G-3 to the Director level. Spousal employment is a major concern among staff, especially women. The United Nations is participating

in a project that establishes spouse support networks in field duty stations and in organizations seeking to address issues relating to spousal employment (see A/59/263, paras. 91-92). At its fifty-eighth session, the International Civil Service Commission decided that four weeks' paid leave for paternity should be granted to staff at Headquarters and family duty stations, and up to eight weeks for staff at non-family duty stations. The issue is addressed in the report of the Commission before the Assembly.<sup>1</sup>

18. The United Nations is committed to fostering a workplace that is free of harassment and intimidation, where all staff can work together with openness, trust and respect for their differences. In this context, guidelines, directives, procedures and policies are already in place and new procedures for dealing with cases of harassment, including sexual harassment, have been prepared and will be promulgated as a new administrative instruction following consultations with staff (see also the report of the Secretary-General on measures to prevent discrimination on the basis of nationality, race, gender, religion or language in the United Nations (A/59/211)).

19. The performance appraisal system (PAS), which is available online, provides a means to emphasize in the individual PAS of staff members at all levels the commitment of the Organization to "respect for diversity/gender", a core value of the Organization, on which staff are evaluated at the end of each PAS cycle. In addition, the PAS reporting system, currently under development, will be able to provide trend analyses.

20. A number of staff development training programmes support the development of greater competencies of staff members on gender issues in the workplace. Staff development programmes in areas related to leadership, management and administration address gender issues and support a gender-sensitive environment. These programmes include: people management, supervision, coaching, competency-based interviewing, conflict resolution and collaborative negotiation skills and General Service development.

21. A series of programmes has been organized to develop competencies in gender mainstreaming in recent years. In response to Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security and the Beijing Platform for Action, programmes have been conducted for the Department of Disarmament Affairs, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Economic Commission for Asia and the Pacific, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, and the United Nations Office at Vienna. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations has appointed a Gender Adviser at Headquarters in 2004, who will support the design and implementation of a department-wide strategy for gender mainstreaming. That department has also launched a gender resource package for peacekeeping operations, which provides guidance for addressing gender issues in most functional areas of peacekeeping.

## **B. Factors affecting progress towards 50/50 gender goal**

22. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 58/144, a research-based analysis of the probable causes of the slow advance in the improvement of the status of women in the United Nations system was undertaken in 2004 by the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women. The analysis was primarily

based on empirical data, an audit of human resources management policies and practices and interviews with women and men in the General Service and related categories and in the Professional and higher categories at the four duty stations of Addis Ababa, Bangkok, Geneva and New York. It identified several factors affecting progress towards gender parity in six areas: recruitment and selection processes; accountability; progress within the Secretariat; working climate and culture; informal barriers to gender balance; and regional ability to meet the 50/50 gender distribution target.

23. The report of the Secretary-General on improvement of the status of women in the United Nations system (A/59/357) highlights the major findings of the analysis and contains recommendations for action. The Office of Human Resources Management will work closely with the Office of the Special Adviser to review the recommended actions arising from the analysis, with a view to determining their feasibility for implementation.

24. Several factors affect progress towards achievement of the 50/50 gender goal. Based on past experience, the following are particularly significant:

- (a) Need for strengthened accountability for achieving gender balance;
- (b) Need for better forecasting of future workforce needs, including completion of a skills inventory to identify women with leadership potential, and for succession planning;
- (c) Need for better coordination in policy implementation among stakeholders;
- (d) Need for specific support strategies for departments facing problems in meeting their gender targets;
- (e) Need for more targeting of women, especially for senior-level posts and for occupational groups where women are chronically underrepresented;
- (f) Limited advancement opportunity for the internal pool of qualified women in the General Service and related categories;
- (g) Need for better online monitoring tools to provide heads of departments and offices with timely information.

### **III. Proposed actions to improve gender distribution**

25. The Secretary-General continues to be fully committed to the attainment of gender parity in the Secretariat. The following specific actions will be taken to help to accelerate improvement in the representation of women in the Secretariat, with particular attention to departments and offices in which women are underrepresented. Actions that may lead subsequently to proposals requiring a decision by the General Assembly will be submitted for its consideration, as appropriate.

**A. Strengthened accountability**

26. Efforts will continue to strengthen the enforcement of the accountability to the Secretary-General of heads of departments and offices for achieving gender balance in their departments. Towards that end, the issue of gender balance will continue to be addressed in meetings of the Senior Management Group, chaired by the Secretary-General, and in the annual programme management plans of heads of departments and offices and the human resources action plans.

**B. Human resources planning**

27. The current human resources planning exercise will be expanded to include those departments and offices that are not yet participating, including field missions, in cooperation with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. Human resources action plans tailored to the needs of field missions will be introduced in 2005 and will incorporate gender targets.

28. New human resources management areas and indicators will be introduced during the fourth human resources planning cycle (2005-2006) to capture new priorities for human resources reform. In addition, information on several management areas of the departmental human resources action plans, such as mobility, rejuvenation, training and performance management, will be disaggregated by gender. Departmental action plans for the fourth cycle will reflect specific situations and needs of each department or office, including in the management area, on gender.

**C. Policy implementation and review**

29. A review of experience in the implementation of the staff selection system is currently being undertaken. In this connection, the Office of Human Resources Management, in coordination with the Office of the Special Adviser, will review the recommended actions arising from the analysis contained in the report on improvement of the status of women in the United Nations system (A/59/357), with a view to determining the feasibility of their implementation. Several special measures previously in effect (see ST/AI/1999/9) are no longer applicable because they had been designed to function in conjunction with the prior system of recruitment, placement and promotion. The Office of Human Resources Management will work with the Office of the Special Adviser to develop measures that are consistent with the existing staff selection system. The future role of departmental focal points on gender in planning and monitoring processes, as well as in other possible areas within the framework of the staff selection system, will be identified and their terms of reference prepared.

**D. Specific support to departments and offices**

30. Concerted efforts are being made towards the goal of gender parity. A consultative process with departments and offices that experience difficulties in meeting their gender targets will be initiated, with a view to identifying specific problems related to the recruitment and retention of suitable women for posts in the

Professional and higher categories. This will enable the formulation of specific measures and support strategies that are tailored to the needs of each of those departments or offices and that can assist them in reaching the gender targets agreed to in the departmental human resources action plans.

#### **E. Expanded pool of qualified women candidates**

31. In cooperation with the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women and heads of department or office, outreach strategies will be developed to expand the pool of qualified women candidates, especially for senior positions and in occupational groups where women are severely underrepresented. In this respect, the cooperation of Member States and national institutions will be sought.

32. A leadership programme focusing on women was piloted in 2004 and will be offered in 2005. Mentoring programmes will be expanded further, building on experiences gained through the programmes provided to the junior Professionals. Activities to raise gender sensitivity and gender mainstreaming among staff and managers will continue to be implemented, including in field missions.

33. Qualified women serving in the General Service and related categories should be treated as a source of potential candidates for Professional level posts in the Secretariat. Owing to the current post limitation with the G to P examination, the Secretary-General has proposed that the percentage of P-2 posts available for successful candidates in that examination be raised to 25 per cent and that a system be introduced to roster those high-scoring, but unplaced candidates and allow them to apply for non-geographic posts for a period not to exceed three years (see A/59/263, para. 189).

#### **F. Online monitoring tools**

34. A planning, monitoring and reporting web site will be launched to provide online monitoring of targets in human resources action plans, including gender statistics on a monthly basis. This online monitoring tool will provide heads of department and office with ready access to up-to-date information, inter alia, on progress made towards meeting gender targets and advance information on expected vacancies.

### **IV. Conclusion and recommendation**

**35. The Secretary-General is fully committed to achieving gender balance in the Secretariat and will seek to improve policies, procedures and programmes and develop new ones. It is expected that the actions elaborated on above will help to accelerate progress towards gender balance, a goal that requires long-term commitment and concerted efforts, including support for cultural change in the Organization.**

**36. The General Assembly is invited to take note of the present report and the proposed actions contained therein. In the event that the implementation of the above-mentioned actions results in proposals requiring the Assembly's decision, they will be submitted for its consideration.**

*Notes*

<sup>1</sup> *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-ninth Session, Supplement No. 30 (A/59/30), vols. I and II.*

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