



## General Assembly

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Agenda item 112

Programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003

### **Cases in which incumbents of the posts are being paid at a level other than the one provided for the post**

#### **Report of the Secretary-General\***

#### *Summary*

By paragraph 66 of its resolution 56/253 of 24 December 2001, the General Assembly noted with concern cases in which incumbents of posts were being paid at a level other than the one provided for in the budget, and requested the Secretary-General to provide it with a comprehensive report on the matter at its fifty-seventh session. The present report responds to that request.

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\* The issuance of the report was delayed due to a need to complete consultations within the Secretariat on the issue of strengthening control over post management.

## I. Introduction

1. By paragraph 66 of its resolution 56/253, the General Assembly noted with concern cases in which incumbents of posts were being paid at a level other than the one provided for in the budget, and requested the Secretary-General to provide a comprehensive report on that matter to the Assembly at its fifty-seventh session.

2. Accordingly, a comprehensive review of post incumbencies, using data of the Integrated Management Information System (IMIS) available on 1 September 2002, was undertaken in order to identify such cases. All regular budget posts at and above the General Service Principal level, across all duty stations within the Secretariat, were included in the review.

## II. Posts encumbered by staff whose personal grades differ from the level of the posts that they occupy

3. The situation whereby an incumbent of a post is paid at a level other than that of the post that he or she occupies may arise only from a personnel action that places the staff member against a post, the level of which is different from the staff member's personal level. According to the IMIS database on post management, as at 1 September 2002 there were 155 regular budget posts across all budget sections encumbered by staff whose personal grades were lower than the level of the occupied post. This occurrence is not unusual. It reflects decisions by the heads of departments and offices to place, for a limited period of time, staff having sufficient qualifications and experience against the vacant posts, pending the completion of recruitment or placement of staff against those posts in accordance with the procedures of the staff selection system. The need for such temporary placement is usually prompted by the requirements of the approved programme of activities. The number of such cases may vary over time, depending on the overall vacancy situation and the programme priorities of the Organization which require the programme managers to maintain the operational capacity of departments and offices at the necessary level on a constant basis. It may be noted that the number of such cases is low compared to the number of approved regular budgetary posts and, at any given time, varies

between 3 and 5 per cent of the number of the posts under review.

4. During the review, one case of a post encumbered by a staff member whose personal grade was higher than the budgeted level of the post was identified. Further examination revealed that this was the result of a decision made by the Secretary-General in 1990 with respect to the implementation plan for the promotion of staff members whose names had appeared in the 1987 promotion register, in accordance with the placement and promotion system in force at that time. The promotion of the staff member had not been regularized in the budget since 1990 owing to the lack of an available post. The post occupied by the staff member was proposed for reclassification in the context of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993 and the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003, but the proposal was never approved.

5. The above-mentioned case is an exception and represents a decision taken by the Secretary-General within the context of his prerogatives and responsibilities as Chief Administrative Officer of the Organization under the Charter of the United Nations. Such a decision either reflects a need to maintain transparency in the application of the Organization's norms and procedures vis-à-vis staff, or responds to a unique situation arising from the Organization's priorities. In the latter case, efforts are always made to identify a vacant post of the required level within the staffing table of the Secretariat and to utilize it on a temporary basis to accommodate the decision until the situation is rectified in accordance with the established procedures.

## III. Control mechanisms

6. At present, the IMIS functionalities on post management and human resources management provide for sufficient safeguards against error in or abuse of the established administrative procedures. Posts against which staff may be placed are made available in IMIS on the basis of approved staffing tables. This procedure ensures that each and every post is linked to a funding source, in accordance with the programme of work approved in the budget. For regular budgetary posts, this procedure is automated. The exceptions to automated placement are processed manually when the post level does not correspond to

the staff member's grade. In such exceptional cases, the data entry and its approval in IMIS are limited to the authorized officials, in line with the system's security standards. When a staff member is assigned to a post budgeted at a grade level that is different from that of the staff member, IMIS sends a warning message to the user. The administrative action for the placement of the staff member against the post can, however, be continued without an error condition being raised by the system, subject to approval of the action by the official to whom such responsibility is delegated. This is the point at which administrative control and accountability become critical.

7. Following the review undertaken in the context of the present report, steps are being taken to increase the level of control in IMIS and to limit further the number of authorized officials responsible for the approval of post availability actions processed in IMIS in cases when the staff member's level is different from that of the post. In this context, the responsibility for approving the availability of a post in IMIS in cases when the staff member's level is higher than that of the post against which that staff member is placed is being removed from the programme managers.

## **IV. Conclusions and recommendations**

8. **Based on the findings of the review of post management, it appears that the IMIS and administrative control mechanisms currently in place in general provide safeguards against error in or abuse of the administrative procedures. Further steps are being taken to strengthen the control mechanisms.**

9. **The General Assembly may wish to take note of the present report.**

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