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### Human resources management

## **Towards a global, dynamic and adaptable workforce**

### **Mobility**

### **Report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions**

#### **I. Introduction**

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered the report of the Secretary-General entitled “Towards a global, dynamic and adaptable workforce: mobility” (A/68/358), in which the Secretary-General presents a refined version of his proposed mobility and career development framework for staff in the Professional and higher and Field Service categories, as well as an alternative proposal. In the report, the Secretary-General responds to the relevant provisions of General Assembly resolution 67/255 in connection with his original mobility proposal, set out in his report on mobility of 21 August 2012 (A/67/324/Add.1). The comments of the Advisory Committee on the Secretary-General’s original proposal are contained in its report on human resources management of 14 November 2012 (A/67/545, paras. 68-136). During its consideration of the most recent report on mobility, the Committee met with representatives of the Secretary-General, who provided additional information and clarification, including written responses received on 11 October 2013. The Committee also received written comments on the Secretary-General’s report from the United Nations Staff Union at Headquarters, the United Nations Office at Geneva Staff Coordinating Council and the Staff Council of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific.

#### **II. Background**

2. In its resolution 67/255, the General Assembly welcomed the commitment of the Secretary-General to develop a managed mobility policy to ensure that the Organization was more capable of delivering on the diverse and complex mandates



entrusted to it by Member States (para. 51). In addition, the Assembly noted that the overall objective of the Secretary-General's proposed staff mobility and career development framework was to develop a workforce that was global, dynamic and adaptable in order to deliver effectively on the mandates entrusted to the Organization by Member States and to foster the skills and capacities of staff (para. 53). The Assembly decided that mobility means a change in position that involves one change or a combination of changes in role, function, department or duty station or a move from the Secretariat to, or to the Secretariat from, an agency, fund or programme of the United Nations system (para. 56).

3. Also in its resolution [67/255](#), the General Assembly reaffirmed the principle of non-discrimination against external recruitment and stressed the importance of ensuring opportunities for external candidates to be considered for selection and recruitment (para. 54). The Assembly requested the Secretary-General to provide a comprehensive report for its consideration at its sixty-eighth session, with the aim of further refining his proposed mobility policy covering, inter alia, the items set out in paragraphs 57 (a) to (k) of the same resolution (para. 57). The Assembly also requested the Secretary-General to present an alternative proposal that, inter alia, incorporates revised incentives and approaches that promote geographic mobility, especially in field-oriented job families (para. 59).

4. In his most recent report on mobility, the Secretary-General presents two options: a refined proposal and an alternative proposal.

5. The refined proposal foresees periodic movement of all internationally recruited staff through the application of position occupancy limits linked with the hardship classification of the duty station and a managed lateral reassignment programme, in which serving staff members would apply to a pool of encumbered positions. The Secretary-General highlights two key modifications to his original proposal: (a) vacancies<sup>1</sup> would be advertised and open to competition among internal and external applicants; and (b) the composition of the job network boards would maintain and preserve management's final decision-making authority in respect of placement recommendations and actions thereon, as a result of which the role of representatives of staff has been amended ([A/68/358](#), paras. 4 and 10). In sections VI, VII and VIII of his report, the Secretary-General addresses the requests of the General Assembly for additional information concerning institutional knowledge, gender parity, geographic distribution, the administration of justice system, performance indicators and costs relating to the implementation of the refined proposal.

6. Concerning the alternative proposal requested by the General Assembly (resolution [67/255](#), para. 59), the Secretary-General presents a proposal that is based on incentives rather than position occupancy limits and that is aimed at promoting geographic mobility, in particular in field-oriented job families. According to the alternative proposal, staff would be encouraged to be mobile through a requirement for one geographic move to secure eligibility for promotion to the P-5 level and a second geographic move for eligibility for promotion to the D-1 and D-2 levels ([A/68/358](#), para. 34). In addition, staff in positions belonging to job families in

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<sup>1</sup> Defined as new positions or positions that are not encumbered because the incumbent has retired, separated or been selected for another vacant position.

which more than 30 per cent of staff are located in C, D or E locations<sup>2</sup> would be required to serve in those locations in order to be eligible for positions at the P-5 level and above. Similarly, for staff in positions within job families in which more than 30 per cent of staff are located outside H duty stations, service in a non-H duty station would be mandatory for eligibility to positions at the P-5 level and above (*ibid.*, para. 35). Liens on posts would continue to be allowed, as a means of encouraging mobility (as they are under the current system), but for a period of two years, to ease the administrative burden of short-term liens (*ibid.*, para. 36). As in the refined proposal, job network boards or the senior review board, rather than individual hiring managers, would make selection recommendations (*ibid.*, para. 37). All available positions would be advertised during staffing exercises and would be open to both internal and external candidates (*ibid.*).

7. The Secretary-General sets out his views on the possible benefits of this refined proposal in section V of his report (*ibid.*, paras. 38-48). In paragraph 48 of the report, he expresses some reservations on the alternative proposal.

### III. General observations

8. **The Advisory Committee continues to express its support for the promotion of staff mobility.**

9. **The Committee welcomes the Secretary-General's efforts to develop both the refined and alternative proposals in compliance with the requests made by the General Assembly in its resolution 67/255.**

10. **In addition, the Committee notes the efforts made to respond to the requests of the General Assembly for additional information set out in paragraph 57 of that resolution.**

11. **The Advisory Committee sees merit in the one aspect common to both the refined and alternative proposals put forward by the Secretary-General, namely, the job network boards, and believes that this aspect could contribute to the development of a viable mobility framework for the Organization. In this regard, the Committee does not object to the establishment of the boards, subject to the observations and recommendations contained in the paragraphs below.**

12. **The Advisory Committee recommends the adoption of the alternative proposal put forward by the Secretary-General, subject to the observations and recommendations contained in the paragraphs below.**

13. **The Advisory Committee believes that suitable transitional measures for the introduction of these changes and their applicability to existing staff would need to be developed prior to their introduction.**

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<sup>2</sup> The International Civil Service Commission has placed all duty stations in one of six categories: H, A, B, C, D and E. H duty stations are headquarters and similarly designated locations where the United Nations has no development or humanitarian assistance programmes, or locations in countries that are members of the European Union. A to E duty stations are field duty stations, categorized in terms of difficulty.

## IV. The refined mobility proposal and the alternative proposal

### External candidates

14. In its report on human resources management, the Advisory Committee noted that the Secretary-General's original mobility proposal provided for eligible internal staff to be given priority in the proposed application process, on the grounds that this would facilitate geographic and functional mobility and help provide some relief to staff in hardship duty stations and assist staff in downsizing missions with finding another suitable post (A/67/545, paras. 97-99). The Secretary-General indicated that under the proposed framework eligible external candidates would be considered only if no internal candidates were found suitable (A/67/324/Add.1, para. 31).

15. The Advisory Committee expressed serious concern about the potential effect that this proposal would have on external recruitment and, by extension, on merit-based selection, geographical representation and gender balance. In the view of the Committee, if the capacity of the Organization to bring in new talent was constrained by the need to place internal candidates first, there was a risk that the Secretariat would become "closed" to external applicants (A/67/545, para. 103). In endorsing the recommendation of the Committee in this regard, the General Assembly reaffirmed the principle of non-discrimination against external recruitment and stressed the importance of ensuring opportunities for external candidates to be considered for selection and recruitment in order to avoid potentially limiting the ability of the Organization to select the best candidates on as wide a geographical basis as possible (resolution 67/255, para. 54).

16. Under the refined proposal, it is proposed that all vacancies would be filled by external and internal candidates identified through position-specific or generic job openings (A/68/358, para. 9). The job network boards would also be able to fill vacancies by drawing on rosters of pre-cleared internal and external candidates (ibid.). In addition, an internal lateral reassignment process would take place, in which serving staff members would apply to a pool of encumbered positions at the same level (ibid., para. 18 (b)). The staff in this process would be those who have either reached their maximum position incumbency limits or served for at least one year in their current assignment and opted in (ibid.). While the Secretary-General indicates that the refined proposal would ensure greater opportunities than the original proposal did for external applicants, he also states that it is difficult to estimate the impact that such a policy would have on external recruitment given that the number of vacancies available cannot be predicted accurately from year to year (ibid., para. 9).

**17. The Advisory Committee notes that while the refined proposal attempts to address the issue of equal opportunities for external and internal candidates, it still significantly disadvantages external candidates since every opening arising from a lateral movement of staff would be filled by an internal candidate through the proposed managed reassignment process. The Committee acknowledges the challenges relating to establishing a mandatory rotation system and at the same time maintaining equal opportunities for external candidates. However, in the view of the Committee, the Secretary-General's refined proposal still falls short of the directive of the General Assembly on this matter.**

18. In this connection, the Advisory Committee recalls the observations it made in the context of its consideration of the Secretary-General's most recent report on the composition of the Secretariat with respect to the lack of improvement in representation of unrepresented and underrepresented countries, as well as the need to improve the representation of women, in particular at senior levels in the Organization (A/68/523, paras. 9-11). The Committee recalls that the General Assembly recently stressed the importance of ensuring opportunities for external candidates in order to avoid potentially limiting the ability of the Organization to select the best candidates on as wide a geographical basis as possible (resolution 67/255, para. 54).

19. The Committee believes that proposals to encourage internal mobility, while necessary to incentivize the movement and career development of already serving staff, should not have a negative impact on efforts to reinvigorate the Organization through the engagement of fresh talent from outside at all levels.

20. The alternative proposal put forward by the Secretary-General does not include the imposition of maximum post occupancy limits or a managed internal lateral reassignment process in which only internal candidates would be able to participate. **In this regard, the Advisory Committee believes that the alternative proposal, which would maintain the ability of external candidates to apply for every job opening, would have no negative impact on efforts to attract external candidates. Thus, the alternative proposal would provide equal opportunities to internal and external candidates.**

#### **Direct and indirect costs of implementing a new mobility framework**

21. The General Assembly requested a comprehensive analysis of the costs of the proposed mobility policy (resolution 67/255, para. 57 (g)), as recommended by the Advisory Committee in its comments on the Secretary-General's original proposal (A/67/545, paras. 129-130). The Committee indicated in that report that a fuller analysis of the total costs, both direct and indirect, of the proposed mobility and career development framework, taking into account current mobility patterns and workforce planning, would have enabled the Committee to undertake a more reliable assessment of the extent to which those costs could be met from within approved resources. The Committee also emphasized the importance of putting in place a robust monitoring mechanism to track the actual costs of an approved framework.

22. In the context of its review of the Secretary-General's original mobility proposal, the Advisory Committee was provided with an indicative costing scenario for the proposed mobility framework that was based on a number of different assumptions (A/67/545, paras. 125-126). The Committee noted, however, that the direct costs provided were not a prediction or an estimate but were based on a particular scenario that could change. The Committee further expressed its doubts about the reliability of the information used to calculate the number of staff expected to change duty station each year (ibid., para. 129).

23. In his most recent report on mobility, the Secretary-General provides an illustrative example of how much it would cost for a single staff member to move (A/68/358, para. 72) and states that the indicative cost of a geographic move across the whole Organization is around \$88,000 (ibid., para. 73). This figure reflects the average one-time cost of geographical mobility per staff member for the duration of

an assignment (\$60,000), as stipulated in a report of the International Civil Service Commission (A/67/30), plus the average recurring cost of geographic mobility for the duration of an assignment (\$28,000) comprising of the non-removal element and mobility allowance. These averages assume staff assignments ranging from two to five years and take into account the classification of the duty station where the staff member is serving. Costs for staff in the Professional and Director categories are based on the P-4 (step 6) level, while costs for staff in the Field Service category are based on the FS-4 (step 6) level.

24. With regard to the indirect costs that might arise from administering a managed mobility framework, the Secretary-General indicates that there may be implications for more systematic knowledge management, skills transfer, training, induction and staff support, but that this is not expected to result in additional resource requirements or administrative costs (A/68/358, paras. 74-78). The Secretary-General also states that this will involve redeploying resources from current structures to the network staffing teams (ibid., para. 78).

25. In response to the request of the General Assembly for a comprehensive cost analysis, the Secretary-General states that average future costs would broadly be the same as they are today (ibid., para. 80) and that, on average, during the five-year period from 2007 to 2011, 1,635 moves per year were initiated by staff in the Professional, Director and Field Service categories (ibid., paras. 3 and 79). He also states, however, that the number of duty station moves can vary greatly from year to year and in response to specific events at field missions (ibid., paras. 2, 3 and 79). The Secretary-General adds that because under the refined proposal the system is self-initiated, the number and type of geographic moves that will be undertaken in the future cannot be firmly forecasted and indicates that the proposal is not about increasing the number of moves, but making them more strategic (ibid., paras. 79 and 81). He also states that under a managed mobility policy, the number of geographic moves might increase. For the purposes of illustration, therefore, the Secretary-General estimates that were there to be an increase of 20 per cent in geographic moves over the current average number of moves, an additional cost of around \$28.2 million would be incurred, split between various sources of funding, depending where the moves took place (ibid., para. 81).

**26. The Advisory Committee has doubts as to the validity of using the average number of annual long-term duty station moves between 2007 and 2011 (1,635) as the proper comparative baseline against which to assess the implications of a new lateral mobility programme. The Committee notes, for example, that the Secretary-General's most recent report on the composition of the Secretariat contains a summary of staff movements for the 12-month period ending on 30 June 2013. The data shows that there were 403 lateral transfers of staff moving between two departments or offices at one or more duty stations (A/68/356, table 15). Upon enquiry, the Committee was informed that 157 of those transfers involved a change in the country of the duty station. While it was also informed that transfers were not the only means of moving laterally, the Committee considers that the 157 geographic transfers undertaken during the 12-month period ending on 30 June 2013 could serve as a proper baseline for the Secretary-General's proposals regarding geographic lateral mobility.**

27. In its consideration of the refined proposal, the Advisory Committee sought additional clarity concerning the matter of costs, in particular since, in the view of

the Committee, the refined proposal anticipates a considerable shift in the patterns of staff movement across the Organization, with a risk of sizeable cost implications. The Committee was informed that many staff who had completed the proposed minimum position occupancy limit (one year) might also initiate a move before their post occupancy limits were up. Therefore, the number of moves would be difficult to forecast and probably would, as is the case today, vary from year to year. The Secretariat reiterated therefore that it was not in a position to provide reliable estimates of future costs.

28. The Advisory Committee takes note of figure IV of annex II to the Secretary-General's report, in which it is indicated that 1,465 of the 14,191 staff who could be subject to the mobility policy (as at 30 June 2012) had exceeded the proposed post occupancy limits as at 31 May 2013. Although the Committee recognizes that not all of these moves would entail a change in duty station, it would appear that were occupancy limits to be introduced, as is proposed in the refined proposal, there could be a significant number of staff moves in addition to the baseline of 157 geographic lateral moves in 2012/13.

29. The Secretary-General states in his report that insufficient staff mobility is not, in fact, a problem within the global Secretariat. Rather, the problem, in his view, is that when staff move and where they move to is not managed or guided by the Organization, since the staffing of each position is considered in isolation (A/68/358, annex II, para. 1). The data also indicate that staff who change duty station tend to move to the same kind of duty station they came from, with the majority of movements being either among headquarters locations or from one non-family duty station to another (ibid., annex II, figure III).

**30. While acknowledging that not all moves would entail a change of duty station, the Advisory Committee points out that were occupancy limits to be introduced, as is proposed in the refined proposal, it is likely that there would be a significant increase in the number of geographic moves, leading to significant financial implications.**

**31. The Advisory Committee recognizes the difficulties in accurately forecasting the additional costs of introducing a new mobility policy, in particular in view of the large number of assumptions underpinning any cost projections and uncertainties as to how the new policy will actually affect the number and nature of staff moves across the global Secretariat. However, the Committee would have expected the Secretary-General to provide at least a number of data projections based on different sets of assumptions, including the number of geographic and non-geographic moves and different staff profiles, showing grade and family circumstances.**

**32. Given the lack of realistic data projections concerning future mobility trends or scenarios and the associated cost implications, including specific proposals on how any possible additional costs would be funded, the Advisory Committee believes that a more prudent approach is warranted.**

**33. Concerning the potential additional costs involved in implementing the alternative proposal, which foresees mandatory geographic moves for eligibility to the P-5, D-1 and D-2 levels, the Advisory Committee was not provided with any information concerning the cost implications of implementing such a proposal. The Committee believes that without the position occupancy limits, the alternative**



proposal is less likely to incur additional costs. The Committee is of the view that by introducing the job network boards, the Secretary-General is more likely to achieve his stated goal of increasing the strategic movement of staff without there being a significant change in either the number of duty station moves or the related costs and of ensuring that internal and external candidates can continue to apply for any job opening (see also paras. 35-56 below on the job networks).

34. The Advisory Committee recommends that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to start tracking and reporting all actual costs related to geographic and non-geographic moves (see also [A/67/545](#), para. 130).

#### **Job networks and job network boards**

35. The refined and alternative proposals put forward by the Secretary-General have one element in common: they both foresee the establishment of job networks and related job network boards. More specifically, the Secretary-General proposes an up-to-date list of eight job networks, which are, in turn, subdivided into 39 job families.<sup>3</sup> However, it is also indicated that an analysis conducted of the existing database of functional titles has indicated that the current delineation of job networks and families requires further realignment. Completion of this exercise is expected in the second half of 2014, before any new mobility policy becomes operational ([A/68/358](#), para. 13).

36. In addition to making arguments in favour of job networks in his report on mobility of 21 August 2012 (see [A/67/324/Add.1](#), para. 22), the Secretary-General states in his most recent report on the matter that the job network boards will assist in making more strategic decisions on staffing, selection and reassignment ([A/68/358](#), para. 20). He affirms that the job network boards or the senior review board, rather than individual hiring managers, would make selection recommendations (*ibid.*, para. 37). It is indicated that this would address the limitation of the current system where the hiring manager, the head of department and the central review bodies review posts on a case-by-case basis, without regard for the overall needs of the Organization or other opportunities for which the applying staff member might be well suited (*ibid.*, para. 40). Under the new system, the job network boards would consider all available positions and staffing options at the same time, thereby having a more holistic view of the Organization's needs (*ibid.*).

37. Under both the refined and the alternative proposals, the job network boards would oversee all selection processes, as well as the new provisions requiring geographic moves in order for staff members to be eligible for senior positions (see also paras. 70-75 below). Furthermore, the Secretary-General indicates that the details of how the boards, the central review bodies and the network staffing teams would work are the same in both the refined and alternative proposals ([A/68/358](#), para. 37). The Secretary-General also sets out the criteria that would be applied by

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<sup>3</sup> The job networks are: conference services (CONFERENCENET); economic and social development (ECONET); communications and information technology (ITECNET); legal (LEGALNET); management and operations support (MAGNET); public information and external relations (INFONET); political, peace and security (POLNET); and safety and security (SAFENET).



job network staffing teams in making recommendations to the job network boards (ibid., para. 24).

38. The Secretary-General indicates that the boards would also relieve individual managers of much of the work currently spent on staff selections. In his report on mobility of 21 August 2012, the Secretary-General indicated that under the current system managers take, on average, 112 days to go through the process of reviewing applications, assessing candidates and making selection recommendations (A/67/324/Add.1, para. 42). According to data contained in the more recent report, prior to the deployment of Inspira hiring managers spent approximately 28 hours per advertised vacancy on recruitment-related tasks (A/68/358, para. 44).

39. The Secretary-General maintains that, by eliminating some of the steps in the current selection system, managers would spend significantly less time on staffing tasks (ibid., para. 43). The Advisory Committee was informed, upon enquiry, that the envisaged biannual staffing exercises could bring the current average selection time down from 212 days to 126 days. The Committee was also informed that the time would be reduced, in part, through the centralization and standardization of assessment processes.

40. In the refined and the alternative proposals, it is proposed that network staffing teams would review the applications from internal and external candidates for each vacant position, screen candidates for eligibility, conduct assessments and compile a shortlist of suitable candidates for each position (ibid., para. 21). Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that the teams would be formed by drawing on existing global human resource capacities from across the Organization. In addition, the different roles and responsibilities of staff currently dealing with human resources would be reviewed and the related positions would be reprofiled to support implementation of the mobility framework.

41. As for hiring managers, it is indicated that they would have the opportunity to describe the needs and critical requirements of the position at the outset, as well as have the opportunity to express their views and make preliminary recommendations regarding candidates on the list prepared by the network staffing teams (ibid., para. 43). The job network boards, made up of senior managers (D-1 level or above from the relevant departments, offices and missions), would then make the final selection recommendations (ibid., para. 20).

42. During its consideration of this matter, the Advisory Committee also sought clarification as to how the proposed job network boards would differ from the appointment and promotion boards that were a feature of the Organization's previous staff selection system. The Committee was informed, upon enquiry, that the appointment and promotion boards used to review a list of ranked qualified candidates for a given position submitted by a hiring manager for a final selection decision. In the current selection system, the central review bodies monitor compliance with staff selection procedures. For each recruitment case, a central review body reviews a list of unranked qualified candidates; if the list is approved, the body endorses the list to the head of department, who then makes a selection recommendation. In the proposals currently under consideration, the central review bodies would continue to monitor the assessment process but the job network boards would assume the role previously granted to hiring managers and heads of department.

43. Concerning the proposed shift in decision-making authority away from individual hiring managers, the Advisory Committee notes that the compacts between the Secretary-General and his heads of department currently contain certain staffing targets with respect to the speed with which vacancies are filled and the achievement of geographic and gender-related targets within the staffing complement of a given department.

**44. The Advisory Committee does not object to the introduction of job networks, the network staffing teams or the job network boards.**

**45. It is the view of the Advisory Committee that the authority of each job network board for making selection recommendations within and across different job families needs to be clearly explained and codified, given that the boards would assume the functions and responsibilities currently assigned to the hiring managers and heads of department with respect to the staff selection system. The Committee also believes that ensuring proper input and involvement from substantive hiring departments continues to be of critical importance.**

**46. The Advisory Committee is also of the view that a shift back to collective decision-making may require a refinement regarding those recruitment targets for which senior managers can be held directly accountable. In this regard, the Committee believes that greater clarity is needed in terms of where accountability will now lie for achieving certain staffing targets.**

47. In the current staff selection system, the determinants of a candidate's eligibility for a given vacancy are the qualification and experience requirements set out in the related job opening. There is currently nothing preventing qualified internal and external candidates from applying for jobs outside their current occupational grouping, assuming they meet the requirements and qualifications for the job opening. In this way, for example, serving public affairs officers who meet the requirements for political affairs functions are not currently prevented from applying for vacancies in that occupational group. Similarly, staff who have spent much of their careers in the "support" career track can still currently be considered for certain substantive functions, assuming they have the necessary qualifications and experience.

**48. In the view of the Advisory Committee, mechanisms to encourage knowledge-sharing between different professional groupings should be supported, given that such moves would advance the stated aim of achieving a multi-skilled and adaptable workforce. The Committee is concerned about the possibility of establishing barriers to movement between one job network and another and cautions against an unduly rigid application of job network requirements in this regard.**

**49. The Committee also recalls that a reconfiguration of the job networks was anticipated and that this would entail ensuring that each network was of a more consistent size to facilitate better management, as well as further improving the grouping of similar functions in order to maximize opportunities for mobility (A/67/545, para. 95).**

50. In addition, the Advisory Committee previously expressed the view that a minimum post occupancy requirement of one year was not sufficient to allow staff members to reach their full potential in a new position. The Committee indicated

that this may also lead to a renewed increase in turnover rates, in particular in peacekeeping missions, and a concomitant erosion of institutional memory (ibid., para. 92). In his most recent report on mobility, the Secretary-General continues to maintain that staff would still be eligible to apply for different positions at any point after serving one year in their position (A/68/358, para. 15). Upon enquiry, the Committee was informed that a two-year minimum commitment would be too long for staff in hardship locations, as it would effectively mean that staff would not be able to start to move until well into the third year of service.

**51. The Advisory Committee believes that staff should be required to serve in a post for a minimum of two years and that this requirement should be generally established by the boards in the interests of preserving the Organization's institutional memory and maximizing staff productivity across all Secretariat offices.**

**52. In conclusion, the Advisory Committee recognizes that the introduction of the job network boards would change the nature of staffing decisions in a very fundamental manner. Therefore, in the view of the Committee, the boards should be kept under close review and a detailed explanation of their functions and any challenges to effective implementation should be included in the first comprehensive report on human resources management subsequent to their implementation.**

#### **Senior review board**

53. The Secretary-General proposes that appointments to senior positions (D-1 and D-2) be handled across all job networks by a senior review board that would not only make selection recommendations but also assume the functions of the existing Senior Review Group. The Group (whose functions are set out in ST/SGB/2011/8) reviews and provides advice on recommendations to the Secretary-General for selections of staff to all positions at the D-2 level. The establishment of the Group has put in place a selection process applicable only to the D-2 level.

**54. The Advisory Committee notes that the Secretary-General's proposal would, in effect, broaden the purview of the existing Senior Review Group to include more than 600 staff members in the Director category.<sup>4</sup> This would effectively result in a threefold increase in the number of selections coming before that Group.**

55. Upon enquiry, the Committee was informed that both the refined and alternative proposals foresee a single senior review board composed of members at the level of Assistant Secretary-General and Under-Secretary-General who would make selection and reassignment recommendations for positions at the D-1 and D-2 levels. In this connection, the Committee also notes that the Secretary-General's discretionary authority with respect to the appointment and promotion of senior officials outside established procedures is limited to staff in his Executive Office, individuals at the level of Under-Secretary-General and Assistant Secretary-General, and special envoys (General Assembly resolution 51/226).

<sup>4</sup> The report of the Secretary-General on the composition of the Secretariat indicates that there were 158 staff members at the D-2 level and 531 at the D-1 level serving in Secretariat entities as at 30 June 2013 (A/68/356, table 7).

56. The Advisory Committee does not concur with the Secretary-General's proposal that recommendations on positions at the D-1 level fall under the purview of a senior review board. While acknowledging that D-1 staff are part of the Organization's senior management, the Committee recalls that both D-1 and D-2 positions are governed by the terms of the current staff selection system and the associated provisions of the Staff Regulations of the United Nations and Staff Rules. The Committee does not believe that adequate justification has been provided for treating staff selections at the D-1 level differently from selections in the Professional and Field Service categories through the same specific review mechanism for the D-2 level. Given that the job network boards would comprise of senior managers at the D-1 level or above, it is the view of the Committee that those same boards could examine selections at the D-1 level.

## **V. Other considerations**

### **A. Legal basis for mobility**

57. In its resolution [53/221](#), the General Assembly emphasized the requirement of mobility of all internationally recruited staff of the Organization as an integral part of their obligation (sect. III, para. 7). In addition, in its resolution [59/266](#), the Assembly recognized the authority of the Secretary-General to assign and deploy staff according to the operational needs of the Organization (sect. X, para. 7).

58. Staff regulation 1.2 (c) stipulates, inter alia, that staff members are subject to the authority of the Secretary-General and to assignment by him or her to any of the activities or offices of the United Nations. Upon enquiry, the Committee was informed that the Office of Legal Affairs considers that, pursuant to the above-mentioned staff regulation, the Secretary-General currently has broad discretionary authority to reassign or transfer staff. At the same time, the Secretary-General is also governed by the requirements of General Assembly resolution [51/226](#), by which all vacancies must be announced so as to give equal opportunity to all qualified staff and to encourage mobility.

59. The Advisory Committee is of the view that the Secretary-General already has authority to move staff across the Organization to address the most important needs of the Organization through the application of staff regulation 1.2 (c) and subject to the provisions of the relevant General Assembly resolutions concerning staff selection. The job network boards should, in the view of the Committee, facilitate the application of the Secretary-General's authority in this regard.

60. The Advisory Committee recommends that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to make use of his existing authority in order to promote mobility in the interests of the Organization, while respecting the provisions of relevant Assembly resolutions concerning staff selection, and to adjust relevant internal administrative issuances to reflect this fact, if necessary.

## B. Liens

61. Another important consideration is the matter of liens, the administrative mechanism that has been used by the Secretariat for a number of years to secure a staff member's right of employment in the parent office when he or she is assigned temporarily to another function or mission, whether on loan or secondment to another United Nations organization. The Secretariat's practice of maintaining liens on posts during mission assignments is set out in an administrative instruction dated 19 May 1995 ([ST/AI/404](#)).

62. The Advisory Committee notes that the refined proposal no longer envisages the application of liens, except in cases of staff going on secondment to United Nations agencies, funds and programmes. The proposed establishment of maximum occupancy limits would eliminate the need for liens.

63. In the alternative proposal, however, liens are retained as a feature in the proposed mobility policy, in order to encourage staff mobility. In recognition of the need for managers to identify suitably qualified candidates to fill temporary vacancies left by a staff member on assignment to another duty station, the Secretary-General proposes that the liens be allowed for a period of only two years ([A/68/358](#), para. 36). The Advisory Committee was informed, upon enquiry, that with the agreement of the receiving mission and the parent department, the lien could be extended for one additional year. **The Committee has no objection to the retention of liens in the Secretary-General's alternative proposal. The Committee concurs with the proposal that the length of a lien should be set at two years, subject to an exceptional extension of one year.**

## C. Staff in the field

64. The Advisory Committee notes that staff serving in the Field Service category have traditionally been more frequently assigned to non-family or hardship duty stations. According to the Secretary-General's recent report on mobility, 1,179 staff in the Field Service category have served at duty stations in the same D and E hardship grouping for five or more years (*ibid.*, annex II, figure III). In addition, the highest number of staff exceeding the proposed maximum position occupancy limits are staff in the Field Service category serving in E duty stations (*ibid.*, annex II, figure IV).

65. **The Advisory Committee is of the view that the Secretary-General's proposals have not sufficiently addressed the issue of sharing the burden of service in hardship duty stations, given that the majority of Field Service positions are in category D and E duty stations and that staff occupying those positions therefore have only limited opportunities to rotate out of those hardship duty stations (see also [A/67/545](#), para. 87).**

66. **In this connection, the Advisory Committee recalls that the Secretary-General has previously indicated that, pursuant to General Assembly resolution [66/264](#), preparations are under way to conduct a comprehensive review of the Field Service category (see [A/67/780](#), para. 55). The Committee recommends that this review address the matter of Field Service staff spending extended periods of time in difficult duty stations and include proposals to address the matter.**

67. In its previous observations on the Secretary-General's mobility proposals, the Advisory Committee acknowledged the need to alleviate the situation of staff who have served in hardship duty stations for long periods of time without being able to move ([A/67/545](#), para. 87). It took the view that ensuring a more equitable sharing of the burden of service in hardship duty stations did not require the introduction of a formal mobility policy and it recommended that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to propose any additional measures he deemed necessary to address this situation.

68. During its consideration of the Secretary-General's recent report on mobility, the Advisory Committee was informed, upon enquiry, that a pilot scheme had been introduced during 2012/13 involving voluntary reassignments of eligible staff among peacekeeping missions, of whom nearly half were based in D and E duty stations. The Committee was informed that as at 30 June 2013, some 49 moves had been successfully arranged, of which 34 involved staff in D and E duty stations. The Secretariat also stressed that the scheme's purely voluntary nature imposed limitations on the number of possible successful transfers.

**69. In order to ensure a more equitable sharing of the burden of service in hardship duty stations, the Advisory Committee recommends that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to continue working on the development of additional measures to address this issue. In this regard, the job network boards could, in the view of the Committee, contribute to a more equitable sharing of the burden of service in hardship duty stations.**

#### **D. Requirement for geographic mobility for senior positions**

70. The Advisory Committee notes that the existing staff selection system does not include any requirements for geographic mobility. It does, however, include a general provision for staff to have two lateral moves before they can be considered eligible for promotion to the P-5 level. The Committee also notes that staff recruited from outside the Organization at the P-4 level become eligible for promotion to the P-5 level after one lateral move at the P-4 level (see [ST/AI/2010/3](#), sect. 6.3).

71. One of the indicators of success of the framework contained in the report on mobility reflects the Secretary-General's view that there are benefits to having senior personnel who have experienced geographic mobility during the course of their careers ([A/68/358](#), para. 66). Both his refined and alternative mobility proposals foresee the requirement for one geographic move to ensure eligibility to the P-5 level.

72. Under the alternative proposal, a second geographic move would be required for eligibility to the D-1 and D-2 levels. In addition, as indicated in paragraph 6 above, the alternative proposal foresees additional requirements for service in C, D or E locations or in non-H duty stations for certain job families as a prerequisite for eligibility to serve at the P-5 level and above. The Advisory Committee notes that the Secretary-General's proposals cover job families with 30 per cent of staff located either in C, D or E locations or outside H locations. However, the Committee also notes that these additional geographic move requirements are being proposed in response to the General Assembly's request for an alternative approach incorporating revised incentives to promote geographic mobility, especially in field-oriented job families, pursuant to paragraph 59 of Assembly resolution [67/255](#).

73. The Advisory Committee concurs with the introduction of the proposed incentives for eligibility to the P-5 level and above.

74. The Advisory Committee recommends two modifications to the proposed requirements in the alternative proposal. First, in view of the shorter career time span available to external candidates entering the Organization at the P-4 level and above, the Committee believes such staff should be provided the opportunity of achieving one promotion without being required to make a geographic move. Second, the percentage for determining which job families should be covered by the provisions contained in the alternative proposal concerning eligibility for service at the P-5 level should be set at 50 per cent, to better reflect the job families that are, in fact, field-oriented.

75. The Advisory Committee also recommends that, as with the introduction of previous changes to post eligibility requirements, currently serving staff at the P-4 level and above should be exempt from the geographic move requirements for a period of four years as a transitional measure.

#### **E. Existing financial incentives**

76. The Secretary-General indicates that many financial incentives for mobility already exist within the current framework of staff entitlements and benefits. He states that, in the context of formulating new proposals or incentives, options to expand these incentives were considered but were either not within the purview of the Secretariat or were considered insufficient to provide real motivation (A/68/358, para. 32).

77. The Advisory Committee recognizes that recent human resource reforms, as well as the current framework of benefits and entitlements, contain elements that encourage mobility, including the provision of relocation grants, non-removal allowances, mobility and hardship allowances and danger pay (in applicable cases), to compensate those staff who are mobile and who are assigned to difficult duty stations. In addition, staff in hardship duty stations have rest and recuperation breaks, family visit and accelerated home leave entitlements, in recognition of the need for staff deployed to non-family duty stations to take regular breaks from difficult work environments and to balance work and life responsibilities. **The Advisory Committee fully supports the continued provision of the financial incentives referred to above in order to encourage mobility and, in particular, to compensate for service in hardship duty stations.**

#### **F. Enhancement of other staff management tools**

78. In its previous comments concerning human resources management reform in the Secretariat, the Advisory Committee recalled that the General Assembly, in its resolution 65/247, had emphasized that a credible, fair and fully functioning performance appraisal system was critical to effective human resources management (A/67/545, para. 23). In particular, the Committee welcomed the development of a rewards and recognition framework currently under development and urged the Secretary-General to continue his efforts in that regard. At the same time, the Committee expressed concern about shortcomings identified in the current system of sanctions for underperformance (ibid., para. 24); the Assembly subsequently expressed



the same concern in paragraph 17 of its resolution [67/255](#). **The Committee believes that decisions on the adoption of a new mobility framework cannot be taken in isolation of ongoing efforts to improve the Organization's performance management system and that mobility should not, therefore, be used as a substitute for the effective management of the performance of staff and the introduction of a viable system of rewards and sanctions.**

79. In its report on human resources management reform, the Advisory Committee considered that the successful implementation of any mobility policy would be largely contingent on improved forecasting of future staffing requirements, as decisions about where staff would be best placed to serve the Organization could only be made if needs are clearly defined ([A/67/545](#), para. 13). While acknowledging that progress had been made in terms of forecasting retirements and initiating recruitment processes well in advance of retirements, the Committee recalled that more could be done to forecast requirements for major occupational groups, including the number of staff needed and the skill sets required (*ibid.*, para. 12). **The Committee expects that the next report on human resources management will include detailed information on measures taken to improve workforce planning, including through the full implementation of Inspira, Umoja and the associated clean-up of human resources-related data.**

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