

Statement of the Chairman

Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

4 March 2016

Human resources management:

Amendments to Staff Rules, Disciplinary matters, Ethics Office

(ACABQ report A/70/718; related reports: A/70/135, A/70/253, A/70/307)

Mobility *(ACABQ report A/70/7/765; related report: A/70/254)*

Secondment *(ACABQ report A/70/72; related report: A/70/229)*

Composition of the Secretariat *(ACABQ report A/70/764; related report: A/70/605)*

Mr Chairman,

I am pleased to introduce the Advisory Committee's reports on human resources management which cover three separate reports (A/70/718), as well as stand-alone reports mobility (A/70/765), secondment (A/70/728) and composition of the Secretariat (A/70/764).

In its report on human resources management (A/70/718), the Advisory Committee took into consideration three reports of the Secretary General: (a) Amendments to the Staff Rules (A/70/135); (b) Practice of the Secretary-General in disciplinary matters and possible criminal behaviour, 1 July 2014 to 30 June 2015, (A/70/253); and (c) Activities of the Ethics Office (A/70/307).

With respect to the amendments to Staff Rules, the Secretary-General proposes to delete provisions in Staff Rule 4.15 on the Senior Review Group and Central review bodies, for the purpose of implementing the new managed mobility framework and simplifying the rule.

The Advisory Committee is not fully convinced of the need to remove the provision related to the term-limits for the members of the Central Review bodies from the Staff Rules, and therefore recommends that the Secretary-General provides additional justification to the General Assembly on this matter.

The Advisory Committee welcomes the new provision proposed under Staff Rule 9.9(b), which ensures that accrued annual leave will not be paid to any staff member who is dismissed for sexual exploitation and abuse, as a first step and encourages the Secretary-General to include in its next report a proposal to broaden the scope of this provision to cover other types of serious misconduct.

With regard to the practice of the Secretary-General in disciplinary matters, the Advisory Committee notes an increase in the number of disciplinary cases with 148 cases over the reporting period, compared to 115 cases during each of the previous reporting periods ending on 30 June 2013 and 30 June 2014, and regrets that the revised administrative instruction on investigations and the disciplinary process under preparation for a number of years, has not yet been issued and expects that it will be promulgated without further delay.

In terms of the activities of the Ethics Office, the Advisory Committee welcomes the efforts taken to provide explanatory details concerning the different mechanisms to report allegations of misconduct and stresses that all efforts be undertaken to ensure that the reporting and advisory mechanisms relating to cases of alleged wrongdoing are made clear to all United Nations personnel.

In terms of the voluntary public financial disclosure initiative open to senior officials at the level of Assistant Secretary-General and above, the Advisory Committee is of the view that the participation in the initiative should be encouraged and therefore trusts that the Secretary-General will encourage senior officials who have not yet publicly disclosed a summary of their assets to do so in future cycles.

Turning to the Secretary-General's report on mobility (A/70/254), the Advisory Committee in its report (A/70/765) recommends approval of the Secretary-General's proposal to reduce from 60 to 30 days the advertising time for posts that are part of the semi-annual staffing exercises under the mobility and career development framework. The Committee also considers that the establishment of a viable comparative baseline against which future mobility trends can be measured should be determined urgently for the General Assembly's consideration no later than the main part of the 71st session. The Committee further recommends that the Secretary-General provide more information on mobility data, including on staff in hardship duty stations and on the lessons learned from the first managed mobility exercise related to the POLNET network.

Regarding the Secretary-General's report on secondment (A/70/229), the Advisory Committee in its report (A/70/728) recommends approval of the Secretary-General's requested actions, including an extension for up to three years of the application of the exceptional measures authorized by the General Assembly in resolutions 67/287 and 68/252. The Committee also recommends that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to continue to intensify his engagement with Member States with a view to identifying alternative solutions for addressing the conflicts between national legislation and the United Nations staff regulations and rules regarding the secondment of active-duty military and police personnel.

Considering the Secretary-General's report on the composition of the Secretariat: staff demographics (A/70/605), the Advisory Committee in its report (A/70/764), in reiteration of its prior position, does not object to the proposed change in the reporting cycle to the calendar year while stressing that the data for the six-month transitional period (July-December 2016) should be reflected in the report to be submitted in the seventy-second session, in a format that facilitates comparisons with past and future periods.

In term of substance, the Advisory Committee reiterates its recommendation that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to undertake an analysis of trends and to explain the possible reasons for certain trends, including the impact of recent human resources reforms. These details should be reflected in future reports.

The data provided in the report of the Secretary-General shows that the number of staff members serving at the levels of Under-Secretary-General and Assistant Secretary-General is still increasing. The Advisory Committee has previously expressed its concern over the apparent upward shift in the grade structure of the Secretariat. Despite increasing demands on the Organization, the Committee does not believe that this should necessarily translate into an upward trend of senior positions since this may lead to fragmentation of leadership responsibilities and diffused accountability. Therefore the Committee expects that greater efforts will be undertaken to ensure that before presenting proposals for high-level positions a review of existing functions and structures is undertaken to minimize any possible overlap in the functional responsibilities at the senior level of the Organization.

In this connection, the Advisory Committee recommends that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to explain his practice and policy on senior appointments in his next overview report of the human resources management reform and the measures taken in this regard. The Committee also expects that the guidelines concerning appointments on one-dollar-per-year contracts will be issued without further delay, as requested by the General Assembly in its resolution 67/255, and that it will be kept regularly informed about these appointments.

At a broader level, the Committee expects that a fully developed strategy concerning the development of a robust workforce planning system will be included in the next overview report on human resources management reform, so that the General Assembly can consider related proposals without further delay.

Thank you, Mr Chairman.