

United Nations  Nations Unies

**Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues
and Advancement of Women**

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Items 112 & 113

**Briefing for Delegates
by
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Advancement of Women**

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Distinguished delegates of the Second and Third Committee,

I take great pleasure in this opportunity to brief you prior to the consideration, by the Third Committee of its agenda items 112: Advancement of Women and 113: Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled, "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century" of the proposed agenda. As in the past, both agenda items will be considered jointly.

Item 112

Advancement of Women

Report of the Secretary-General on the improvement of the status of women in the United Nations system

The report on the improvement of the status of women in the United Nations System is presently under preparation in response to General Assembly resolution 55/69. We very much regret the late submission of this report, which is due to delays encountered by the Office of Human Resources Management in the processing of personnel statistics through IMIS.

Since our last report, measured progress has been made in improving the representation of women on geographical appointments in the Secretariat. At the end of June, women accounted for 40.2 per cent of the staff on such appointments. Modest progress has also been made in improving the representation of women within the UN system as a whole. According to the latest common system personnel statistics, the percentage of women stood at 33.5 per cent as of 1 January 2000.

Despite steady progress in improving women's representation on geographical appointments, there has been a decline in the representation of women in the larger population of UN Secretariat Professional staff with appointments of one year or more. Since June of last year, the percentage of women in this population has declined by nearly 2 percentage points, to 34.6 per cent. The decline, first documented in the Secretary-General's report to the forty-fifth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, is due principally to the significant increase in the number of staff assigned to peacekeeping and other special missions.

The Secretary-General has stressed that greater attention must be paid to gender issues in various aspects of peacekeeping, including in the selection of mission leadership and in the staffing of various mission components. Steps are being taken to ensure that more systematic attention is paid to gender issues in the staffing and management of peacekeeping missions. These include the formation of a Senior Appointments Group to advise the Secretary-General on the selection of candidates for senior leadership positions as well as the development of a global mission staffing strategy which will take gender distribution and geographical representation fully and effectively into account.

I am pleased to inform you that the gender action plans introduced by Ms. Salim and myself last August have now been fully integrated within the broader framework of the departmental Human Resources Management Action Plans.

The Human Resources Management Action Plans developed by department heads and the Office of Human Resources Management are an important new tool for human resources planning. These plans are also the key tool for monitoring the performance of departments in meeting human resources management goals, in particular gender balance, and for assisting the Secretary-General in establishing the accountability of managers.

Last year, we introduced a new table in our report to single out those departments which met or exceeded the goal of gender balance in the appointment and promotion of staff. This year, I am pleased to note that this goal was met by 15 departments and offices, an increase of five over the previous year.

The endorsement by the General Assembly of the Secretary-General's human resources management reform programme (GA resolution 55/253) will require the introduction of a new recruitment, placement and promotion system. My Office will work closely with the Office of Human Resources Management to ensure that the special measures for women are integrated in the new selection system. This requires close monitoring also by Member States.

On the quality of work/life front, increasing attention has been paid to the issue of spouse employment. The head of OHRM has requested heads of offices at overseas duty stations to take practical steps to improve spouse employment opportunities, as well as to open informal discussions with the relevant ministries to see what can be done to facilitate spouse employment. These initiatives are a product of joint discussions between the Inter-agency Quality of Work/Life Committee and the Inter-Agency Task Force on Mobility.

My Office in June formed an inter-agency working group to review and propose needed improvements in our policies to prevent and handle harassment, including sexual harassment complaints. Following my recent visit to the UN Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina, we have also been working with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, on the preparation of a model statement which can be issued by heads of mission to all members of peacekeeping missions. This statement aims to inform all mission personnel, in clear and straightforward terms, of the Organization's policy on gender equality, respect for diversity, and the standards of behaviour expected of members of the UN community.

Report of the Secretary-General on the critical situation of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (A/56/279)

On the question of INSTRAW, the Gender Awareness Information Networking System (GAINS) continues but the projection of the completion of phase III by the end of this year has had to be scaled back to next year partly as a result of the unexpected departure of the Director in July, thus leaving a core staff of three (1 P-3 and 2 P-2) professionals and four general service.

At its substantive session in July the Economic and Social Council recommended that all efforts be made to continue the Institute and the GAINS project. It also recommended that the unspent balance of the \$US 800,000.00 advanced by the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session earlier this year, be transferred to the Institute's budget for 2002. Should this be approved by the General Assembly at this session it would likely bring the budget of INSTRAW with anticipated contributions to only \$US 600,000.00. The Council also recommended that the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) be asked to look at other options for the Institute (to be checked).

Since the Council's meeting in July the Institute has received contributions totalling \$59,980.00 from Austria, Guatemala, Spain and Thailand, for which the Secretariat and the Institute are most grateful.

The Committee may wish to pay special attention to paragraphs 24 and 25 of the report of the Secretary-General, which highlights the dire situation of the Institute. The report in paragraph 24 points to the need for considerable downsizing of the core staff and a significant reduction of its operational activities should the budget be at the level of \$600,000.00. It also points out in paragraph 25 that the Assembly may wish to decide on the scope within which INSTRAW could operate beyond 2001 in a productive and cost-effective manner. This is a very serious issue.

Related resource issues

Delegates may wish to know that in connection with the work mandated in the area of the advancement of women, certain proposals appear in the proposed programme budget for 2002/2003. These include requests for a P-4, a P-2 and one general service staff in connection with the servicing of the CEDAW Committee's work on the Optional Protocol. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) recommended these posts for approval. A related request is to finance a third session of the CEDAW Committee next year, which would enable the Committee to clear the backlog of States Parties reports awaiting review.

In the area of gender mainstreaming, the ACABQ recommended that as gender mainstreaming is a regular mandated part of the work of the Organization, the D-1 post of Principal Officer for Gender Mainstreaming, in the office of the Special Adviser should be financed under the regular budget starting from the 2002/2003 budget period. As you

are aware this post is currently financed from extra-budgetary sources through the Trust Fund to follow up the Fourth World Conference on Women.