Excerpts on *Flexible Work Arrangements (FWA)* from the Secretary-General's Reports on the Improvement of the status of women in the United Nations system

2010 A/65/334
2008 A/63/364
2006 A/61/318
2004 A/59/357
2003 A/58/374
2002 A/57/447

Improvement of the status of women in the United Nations system
Report of the Secretary-General - 9 September 2010 - A/65/334

Summary

In response to General Assembly resolution 64/141, the present report provides information on the status of women in the United Nations system, including up-to-date statistics, information on progress made and obstacles encountered in achieving gender balance, and recommendations for accelerating progress. Over the two year reporting period, 1 January 2008 to 31 December 2009, the representation of women in the Professional and higher categories in the United Nations system increased marginally from 38.4 to 39.9 percent, translating into an average increase of 0.75 percent per annum. The highest and lowest representations of women registered at the P-2 and D-2 levels, at 57.4 and 26.0 percent, respectively. *In response to a system-wide survey of United Nations entities on achieving gender balance the following challenges were noted: inadequate accountability, monitoring and enforcement mechanisms; lack of special measures for gender equality; weak integration of focal point systems;* ***weak implementation of flexible work arrangements****;* insufficient outreach and low numbers of qualified women applicants. *As recommendations to address the stated challenges,* the entities emphasized the need for senior leadership sponsorship, enhanced monitoring and accountability, and more rigorous implementation of existing policies including special measures for women and ***flexible work arrangements.*** Although there is heightened awareness of the imperative for gender balance, reversal of the negative trends at some levels and the slow pace for others requires urgent and intensified action and demonstrated leadership, mirroring that currently exercised for the Ungraded (UG) level, where the increase of 3.5 percent in the United Nations system and 5.6 percent (USG) and 6.6 percent (ASG) in the United Nations Secretariat has set positive historical records.

Page 31.

56. The United Nations Secretariat registered a 3.0 percentage point gain, **(Table 18**) over the decade, in the representation of women at the combined P-1 to P-5 levels (37.1 percent in 2000 to 40.1 percent in 2009), missing sharply its own minimum one percentage point per year target, set out in UN Secretariat Departmental Human Resource Actions Plans (HRAPs). Particularly regrettable is a decline of 1.3 percentage points over the decade at the P-5 level, while the United Nations system registered a 7.9 percentage point increase at that level. The statistics point to the need to rigorously implement policies adopted to attract and retain staff, such as for example, the special measures.

Page 33.

6. Flexible working arrangements awareness and outreach strategy

66. The Steering Committee on the Implementation of Change Management Measures chaired by the Deputy Secretary-General endorsed the flexible working arrangements awareness and outreach strategy developed by the Focal Point for Women and the Office of Human Resources Management to increase the use of flexible working arrangements in the workplace. The Deputy Secretary-General wrote to all heads of departments and offices, drawing their attention to the well-documented benefits of such arrangements and the need to incorporate them into their departments' daily operations. In addition, an indicator on flexible working arrangement has been included in the compacts of the heads of departments with the Secretary-General, to be reviewed annually. The compacts will henceforth require an action plan on the implementation of flexible working arrangements, seeking thereby to encourage and monitor progress for each of the four options offered.

67. In addition, in line with the efforts to strengthen outreach and advocacy on flexible working arrangements through its communication strategy, in 2009 the Focal Point for Women conducted a Secretariat-wide survey of all staff in the field and at headquarters. The results of the survey, as well as an advocacy piece entitled "Myths and facts about flexible work arrangements" were posted on the Focal Point for Women website for all system-wide focal points, in particular for those of the Secretariat and for members of the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality (available from http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/fp.htm). The survey, to which approximately 2,500 staff members responded, found that most staff viewed flexible working arrangements as a positive organizational tool; that there was a strong interest in such arrangements among staff; that the use of flexible working arrangements had a significant impact on staff productivity, job satisfaction, motivation and organizational commitment; that many United Nations staff members were not aware of the basic provisions of existing policies on flexible working arrangements; that staff perceived such arrangements as receiving little support at senior management levels; and that only a minority of staff members had actually requested the use of flexible working arrangement options, usually due to a lack of knowledge or the lack of the manager's or supervisor's support.

Page 37.

Work/life balance and flexible working arrangements

82. United Nations entities were asked to report on the availability and use in their institutions of flexible working arrangements, including the four options outlined in the Secretary-General's bulletin (ST/SGB/2003/4): staggered working hours, telecommuting, scheduled breaks for learning and compressed work schedules. Eight entities (UNDP, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, the United Nations Secretariat, the Pension Fund and the Pension Committee, UNOPS and UNRWA) reported that they offered all four options. Of the 31 entities, 22 reported that they had the option of staggered working hours, 21 had a telecommuting option, 16 had the option of scheduled breaks for learning and 14 had the option of compressed work schedules. Since the previous reporting period, 7 entities have introduced telecommuting arrangements and 3 have introduced compressed work schedule options. During the same period, the number of entities offering a scheduled break for learning declined by four. The option of staggered working hours remained unchanged and continues to be offered in 22 entities.

83. With regard to the monitoring of flexible working arrangements in the entities, only UNIDO reported using an online tracking system. Others reported that monitoring was the responsibility of their human resources division, often in cooperation with the manager/director/supervisor (ILO, IFAD, UNHCR and PAHO). Two United Nations entities reported that they did not monitor the arrangements at all (the United Nations Secretariat and UNFPA).

84. With regard to implementation of flexible working arrangements, all entities were asked about accessibility and usage of each of the four options. Of the 22 entities offering the staggered working hours option, 15 noted that this option was "easily" to "very easily" granted, and two entities reported that it is "occasionally" granted. Of the 21 entities reporting that they had a telecommuting option, 8 noted that it was "easily" to "very easily" granted, 6 reported that it was occasionally granted, and 1 reported it was almost never granted. Seven of the 16 entities that confirmed offering the option of a scheduled break for learning reported that it was "easily" to "very easily" granted, 4 reported that it was occasionally granted and 2 reported it was almost never granted. Of the 14 entities that reported having a compressed work schedule option, 8 reported that this option was "easily" to "very easily" granted. Several entities also reported that they were considering the options on a case-by-case basis (for example, the International Court of Justice) or were piloting them and evaluating the results before extending them to more employees (for example, UNESCO).

Page 40.

96. Alternatively, therefore, ICSC decided:

(a) To encourage entities to improve gender balance by taking advantage of the high number of impending retirements over the next five years;

(b) To underscore the importance of workforce planning, talent gap analysis and skills inventories when addressing problems of the recruitment and retention of women;

(c) To encourage the organizations to implement outreach initiatives, targeted recruitment, policies for work/life balance, flexible working arrangements, career coaching and development, and programmes in management skills and leadership development;

(d) To highlight investment in staff development and the development of an internal candidate pool.

Page 40.

Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality

98. The Network concluded, inter alia:

(a) That the tools developed by the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women and Focal Point for Women to propel progress were very useful for advocacy and for the work of each entity. Particular mention was made of the new United Nations gender strategy and action plan, the gender scorecard, the user-friendly and comprehensive focal point website which covers all entities of the United Nations system, surveys on work/life balance and the functioning of the focal point system, and general advocacy materials;

(b) That improvement in the representation of women, in particular at the D-1 level and above, was crucial. They also noted that achievement of gender balance ought to be a minimum performance standard for all United Nations entities;

(c) That flexible working arrangements and spouse employment policies remained critical to promote women's careers and to address recruitment, retention and organizational culture issues. The members of the Network suggested that a task force be formed to advise on possibilities for improvement of institutional policies and implementation.

Page 41.

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

106. UNHCR set a goal of reaching gender parity by 2010 at all levels. To that effect, the policy framework includes a communication strategy, a summary of responsibilities and measures for ensuring gender equity in the management of the workforce. More specifically, its measures are subdivided into the following five categories:

(a) Recruitment and posting. Recruitment at all levels with a 3:2 women to men ratio, including at senior levels;

(b) Staff development. Integration of gender issues into leadership and mentoring programmes, and management assessment tools to ensure the development of women for senior positions;

(c) Performance management. Gender equity as a core competency within performance appraisal reports;

(d) Promotions. Incorporation of seniority as a consideration for women candidates where it is beneficial to them;

(e) Work life balance. Active encouragement of flexible working arrangements, exit interviews, spousal employment policies and similar measures. UNHCR surveyed all staff and their supervisors using flexible working arrangements, noting that their results showed general satisfaction with the effectiveness of the policy.

Page 42.

United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

109. In 2010, UNRWA will develop a staff well-being framework involving new policies and initiatives around flexible working arrangements, family-friendly leave entitlements, childcare facilities and spouse employment to improve work conditions at headquarters and field duty stations. The Agency is also developing a new succession planning approach with an active focus on developing high-potential female staff.

Page 43.

B. Impediments to achieving gender balance at the P-4 to D-2 levels

112. Of the 31 United Nations entities, 27 responded to the survey on impediments for the achievement of gender balance at the P-4 to D-2 levels. All responding entities noted that they continued to encounter obstacles in one or several of the six categories of impediments, which, in order of importance, were as follows: an inadequate level of qualified female applicants; lack of special measures for gender equality or for women; lack of outreach in recruitment and lack of accountability (these latter two emerge on par); and the absence or weak integration of focal points as well as inflexibility, or weak implementation of flexible working arrangements, with these categories being qualified by observations that while policies already existed, their implementation required significant strengthening. The preceding impediments are similar to those considered in the previous report (A/63/364), indicating that they are persistent problem areas. Each impediment is addressed below.

Page 44.

117. **Lack of flexible work arrangements; lack of a gender balance focal point system.** Five entities identified the need for a gender balance focal point system as one of the top three impediments; two considered that the lack of flexible working arrangements was a major impediment. A weak gender balance focal point system and the lack of flexible working arrangements were rated as less important impediments to gender parity largely because responding entities indicated that they already either had or were part of a network of focal points (15 entities) and/or also had flexible working arrangement policies in place (27 entities).

V. Responsibility and accountability of the Office of Human Resources Management and the Chief Executives Board for promoting gender balance

118. In resolution 64/141, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to include in his report information on the responsibility and accountability of the Office of Human Resources

Management of the Secretariat and the secretariat of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination for promoting gender balance.

119. The CEB secretariat is responsible for data collection and coordination on a range of management issues in the United Nations system but does not have implementation authority. In that context, the secretariat prepared a note on exit interview questionnaires, as described in paragraph 86 of the present report. The secretariat also presented other documents with a bearing on gender, as described in section IV of this report (paras. 91 to 94).

Page 44.

120. In contrast to CEB, the principal responsibility of the Office of Human Resources Management, through the Management Performance Board, is to ensure compliance with and implementation of all human resource policies, including those with a bearing on gender-related issues, in all offices and departments in the United Nations Secretariat. In addition to indicators on growth in gender balance, the compacts of the Secretary-General with departments contain a new objective on flexible working arrangements, with the results to be reported to the Management Performance Board in 2011. The human resources action plans also continue to include a commitment by heads of departments and offices to maintain 50 per cent female representation or to improve representation by two percentage points annually over the baseline for levels with female representation below 50 per cent.

130. Flexible working arrangements and a work/life balance approach should be actively promoted, holding managers accountable for increasing implementation of all such arrangements. Organizational staff surveys and CEB recommendations consistently highlight the benefits of flexible working arrangements, including enhanced job satisfaction and organizational productivity, which both positively impact dedication to the goals of the institution, effective and modern management and retention, and help to establish the United Nations as a standard-setting exemplary institution and employer. According to the results of the survey of United Nations entities, while some flexible working arrangement policies are available in most entities, their implementation is weak and lacking accountability.

Improvement of the status of women in the United Nations system
Report of the Secretary-General - 18 September 2008 - A/63/364

Summary

In response to General Assembly resolution 62/137, the present report provides information on the status of women in the United Nations system, including up-to-date statistics, information on progress made and obstacles encountered in achieving gender balance, and recommendations for accelerating progress. It includes information on the representation of women in organizations and agencies of the United Nations system from 1 January 2005 to 31 December 2007, and in the United Nations Secretariat from 1 July 2006 to 30 June 2008. In the United Nations system, the representation of women in the Professional and higher categories increased negligibly from 36.9 to 38.4 per cent between December 2004 and December 2007, a total of 1.5 per cent — an annual average increase of 0.5 per cent. In the Secretariat, the percentage of women staff in the Professional and higher categories showed a negligible improvement of 0.2 per cent during the two-year period 1 July 2006 to 30 June 2008, increasing from 37.4 to 37.6 per cent. Challenges encountered by United Nations system entities in achieving gender balance include: inadequate accountability, monitoring and enforcement mechanisms; lack of special measures for gender equality; weak integration of focal point systems; weak implementation of ***flexible work arrangements***; and higher attrition rates for women as compared to men. Among the recommendations for accelerating progress are senior leadership sponsorship, enhanced monitoring and accountability, and more rigorous implementation of existing policies. Although there is heightened awareness of the imperative for gender balance, reversal of the slow trend and pace towards gender parity requires urgent and intensified action.

Page 14.

III. Obstacles encountered in achieving gender balance in the United Nations system

17. In the context of the information in section II of this report on the overall representation of women in the United Nations system and the request in resolution 62/137 for information on obstacles encountered in achieving gender balance, United Nations entities were surveyed on the major impediments at the P-4 to D-2 levels. The results can be divided into seven broad categories: inadequate accountability, monitoring and enforcement mechanisms; lack of special measures for gender equality; the absence of or weak integration of focal point systems within departments; inflexible work arrangements;

insufficient outreach; low numbers of qualified women applicants; and lack of adequate data on the causes of high attrition rates for women.

Page 15.

22. With respect to flexible work arrangements, lack of flexibility in work arrangements was considered a major or somewhat of an impediment to the achievement of gender parity in 38.5 per cent (10 out of 26) of the entities. In contrast, 61.5 per cent (16 out of 26) of the entities indicated that flexible work arrangements were not an impediment to achieving gender parity within their entity.

Page 16.

IV. Recommendations for accelerating progress in the United Nations system

A. International Civil Service Commission review of gender balance in the United Nations common system

27. At its sixty-seventh session, the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) considered gender balance in the United Nations system on the basis of information gathered through a questionnaire (to which 21 out of 23 entities surveyed responded5), and the statistical database of the secretariat of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB).

28. The report notes that gender-balanced staffing, including recruitment and retention of women, is increasingly recognized as essential to the success and effectiveness of organizations in all spheres of work and that improvement in the representation of women in the United Nations common system depends on the effective implementation of gender plans in areas including recruitment, promotion, retention, work/life policies, gender awareness, monitoring and accountability. Finally, the report concludes that special measures may be needed and that effective enforcement of existing policies coupled with real-time monitoring are required.

Pages 17-18**.**

B. Report of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination on work/life balance in the organizations of the United Nations system

30. In its report on work/life balance in the organizations of the United Nations system (CEB/2008/HLCM/HR11), CEB noted that work/life balance and staff well-being have become important human resource issues both in public and private sector organizations. CEB found that, when implemented, work/life balance and staff well-being held benefits for organizations owing to enhanced staff commitment and productivity, and that they were increasingly relevant to attracting, recruiting and retaining staff. However, such policies might only be implemented effectively if their use was supported by the organizations' leadership, workplace culture, infrastructure and human resources department, through active encouragement and advocacy.

31. The CEB report notes that the United Nations presents a unique set of characteristics that bring specific needs and challenges to the agenda of work/life balance and staff well-being. On average, 85 per cent of United Nations staff members are expatriates, and in some entities the figure is close to 95 per cent (ibid., para. 20). In addition, many United Nations staff in high-mobility entities have dual-career families, resulting in additional pressure. Furthermore, an expected surge of retirements over the next five years will leave an enormous gap in skilled and experienced staff, making effective implementation of work/life balance all the more important.

32. The CEB analysis of work/life balance/staff well-being within the United Nations system divides policies into three areas: flexibility of time (e.g., flexi-time, part-time work); flexibility of location (e.g., telecommuting); and policies that support work/life balance/staff well-being in general (e.g., rest and recuperation, basic security training). The report indicates that flexible working arrangements have been almost uniformly adopted across the system (96 per cent) and that general work/life balance/staff well-being policies are mandatory in many organizations. In fact, together with staff counselling and/or staff outreach support and stress management, general work/life balance policies make up the bulk of the work/life balance/staff well-being programmes. A notable gap is the small percentage of childcare facilities that are made available, although this is identified as one of the most effective means of facilitating work/life balance (see para. 42 of the report).

33. However, the CEB report found that flexibility with respect to employee's location (telecommuting) had only been supported by 117 of the organizations providing information. This meant that an important, low-cost and high-yield work/life balance policy had potentially been overlooked. Owing to decreasing costs of computer technology and connectivity, telecommuting could reap great rewards for organizations with small human resources budgets. Most entities had in place the technological capacity to allow telecommuting as the same infrastructure that supports travel duty enabled telecommuting. Low usage of telecommuting might therefore be explained by the fact that it was not seen as an acceptable and routine work method. Implementing telecommuting effectively requires a strong communication strategy to raise awareness of the policy and encourage all staff members to use it.

34. The report concludes, inter alia, regarding telecommuting, that in order to effectively manage departments where work/life balance is honoured, managers need to manage outputs and not hours behind the desk. "When a significant amount of work is done outside the sight range of managers, it creates a new dynamic with regards to staff performance management. This greater autonomy and accountability is usually rewarded with greater staff engagement" (para. 66). Following are some of the recommendations from the CEB work/life balance report:

(a) Actively promote the uptake of existing work/life balance provisions by using organizational champions and addressing the stigmatization of work/life balance programmes;

(b) Include "management on outputs" in all United Nations leadership and management courses and promote results-based management practices;

(c) Further analyse the impact on staff engagement and productivity and research and analyse work/life balance programmes from the corporate world against the mandate, needs and challenges of the United Nations system.

Page 21.

4. Improving organizational culture and removing informal barriers

41. The Expert Group Meeting, found earlier analyses that the organizational culture in the United Nations system impeded women from rising to the top. It noted that even when women reached the top, they often had to conform to, and struggle with, a culture that reflected "male concerns and ways of working". In that regard, experts emphasized that United Nations policies, rules, regulations, and practices were often not conducive to the reconciliation of work and family responsibilities. The meeting recommended the following:

(a) Incorporate gender-related indicators and questions on separation/retention indicators, work/life balance and managerial issues into mandatory exit interviews;

(b) Develop and promulgate multiple measures of productivity independent of the variables of time and physical location and based on output;

(c) Intensify and continue training which enhances both individual and team engagement enabling greater productivity, innovation and reduced attrition, and creating more opportunities for career growth and loyalty.

5. Work/life balance and flexible work

42. The Expert Group Meeting emphasized the need to move beyond the traditional linear career model in order to acknowledge and support different career and life phases and promote work/life balance. Changing global demographics mean that people's care obligations are no longer limited to childcare, but increasingly extend to caring for ageing parents. In addition, the meeting found that difficulties and discrimination were often encountered by women upon re-entry into the system after extended periods of family leave. Alternatively, in some cases, women were not even granted their leave at times of family emergency or exigency.

43. The Expert Group Meeting stressed the possibility of telecommuting or working from alternative work stations as one way of facilitating better work/life balance. In that context, the experts noted that the mere existence of flexible working arrangements such as telecommuting and part-time work was insufficient. When such arrangements were not promoted or implemented properly and/or were not a socially acceptable option for employees, they were not utilized to their full potential. In that regard, management should lead by example. Home-based work can save organizations operating costs, including for office space, and may also present a "green" solution. The meeting recommended the following:

(a) Appoint a dedicated champion for flexible working arrangements at as senior level as possible, and who is not in the human resources department, in each United Nations entity to be responsible for the implementation of the range of flexible working arrangements. The duties would include active advocacy of work/life balance for managers and staff;

(b) Encourage organizations to help staff to find day-care and elder-care solutions.

Page 22.

E. Examples of gender balance good practice in the United Nations system

Page 23.

2. United Nations Development Programme

47. The UNDP report of March 2008 entitled “Gender Parity in the UNDP” recommends special measures, including affirmative action to attain and sustain the 50/50 parity goal, and more efficient and prevalent inter-agency mobility, particularly for senior women. It also emphasizes the need for more rigorous implementation of work/life policies and flexible working arrangements to create an enabling work environment and stronger accountability. Specific good practices include (a) the gender and diversity scorecard to measure, monitor and track progress towards gender parity and other aspects of diversity by location and grades, in real time; and (b) the Leadership Development Programme for entry-level staff, where women’s representation is 53 per cent.

Pages 25-26.

4. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

51. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has set up a special mechanism called the Special Constraints Panel for staff who experience personal difficulties at the time of normally scheduled rotation. The staff can appeal to the Special Constraints Panel for a review of their case. The panel considers each staff member’s particular circumstances and gives recommendations which are submitted to the Director of Human Resources for endorsement. The Special Constraints Panel was established in 1998 and has handled over 260 applications. Although the Special Constraints Panel has been equally approached by men and women, most of the cases are concerned with family responsibilities which usually fall more heavily on women than on men. UNHCR reports that the Special Constraints Panel has been helpful to staff members trying to juggle family responsibilities with career choices.

6. World Health Organization

54. The World Health Organization (WHO) has recently introduced initiatives to attract a diverse range of candidates. The organization is improving outreach through targeting professional organizations which have a large female membership, particularly in unrepresented or underrepresented countries. In addition, WHO offers workshops in selected countries to enable nationals to compete more effectively for WHO positions. The organization has incorporated broader education profiles into position descriptions and terms of reference to attract the largest pool of qualified external and internal candidates. In order to retain a diverse workforce, WHO has introduced practices to build a more supportive workplace. These practices include strengthened policies in relation to work/life balance, particularly on leave and flexible work arrangements that enable staff to better balance their professional and personal needs.

Pages 25-26.

V. Responsibility and accountability of the Office of Human Resources Management of the Secretariat and the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination for promoting gender balance

56. The principal responsibility of the Office of Human Resources Management is to ensure compliance with all human resource policies including gender issues in all offices and departments in the United Nations Secretariat and to ensure accountability in that respect. Implementation is monitored through the human resource action plans and the Secretary-General's compacts with departments and office heads, both of which include indicators for various human resource components. With respect to gender, the indicators monitored are the 1 per cent annual growth rate per department and female selection rates. In that context, the Policy Committee, in February 2008, assigned the Office of Human Resources Management to work with the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women on certain specific aspects:

(a) To institute a gender scorecard to further expand and systematize monitoring for each department and office of the Secretariat, as part of the twice yearly reporting to the Management Committee;

(b) To work with departments to develop revised 2009-2010 human resource action plan gender balance targets in consultation with the Office of the Special Adviser;

(c) Together with the executive offices and Office of the Special Adviser to undertake more pro-active efforts to increase awareness and greater acceptance of the policy on flexible work arrangements, including monitoring and analysis of how these arrangements are being implemented and to analyse exit interviews of staff leaving the organization.

Page 40.

VII. Progress made, obstacles encountered and recommendations for achieving gender balance in the Secretariat

A. Decisions and related actions of the Secretary-General's Policy Committee

Page 41.

1. Letter of the Secretary-General to the heads of departments and offices

94. The Secretary-General issued a letter to all heads of departments and offices in April 2008 requesting them to take steps to accelerate progress towards gender balance and urging them to take advantage of upcoming retirements at the D-1 and P-5 levels to redress the current imbalance. He encouraged the use of flexible work arrangements, the implementation of new and strengthened terms of reference for departmental focal points for women, and also endorsed the development of gender balance scorecards to better monitor statistics on gender representation and to gather data on the use of flexible working arrangements, the functioning of the gender focal point system, the selection of women from the roster, and other measures that would ensure

the recruitment, promotion and retention of women in the workplace. Furthermore, the Secretary-General reiterated that message, in a letter to United Nations staff dated 28 April 2008. He noted that progress towards parity at all levels between men and women in the Organization had been slow and called for an organizational culture shift to facilitate attaining and sustaining gender balance at all levels and to foster a healthy work environment for all staff, both men and women.

2. Gender strategy

95. The Secretary-General charged the Deputy Secretary-General with the preparation of a gender strategy for the Organization. This strategy is expected to be developed by the end of 2008 and is to include analysis and action points for issues related to gender awareness; human resource policies such as recruitment, promotion, and retention; improved implementation of work/life policies; and monitoring and accountability. Regarding monitoring and accountability, the Secretary-General has directed the Organization to institute a gender scorecard for each department and office, initiate twice-yearly gender reporting to the Management Committee, monitor and strengthen implementation of flexible work arrangements and undertake exit interviews and analysis in order to identify barriers.

Page 42.

5. Flexible working arrangements

98. The Secretary-General encouraged the use of flexible working arrangements as a means to achieve accelerated progress and work/life balance. However, the number of flexible arrangements users in the Secretariat has decreased from 2,410 in June 2004 (see A/59/357. para. 87) to 1,137 as at June 2008. Staggered working hours (44.1 per cent, 501 of 1,137) and compressed work schedule (33.6 per cent, 382 out of 1,137) constitute the two most widely used options. Telecommuting (8.5 per cent, 97 out of 1,137) and scheduled break for external learning activities (13.8 per cent, 157 out of 1,137) have fewer users. The breakdown of users by category is: General Service and related categories (45.2 per cent, 514 out of 1,137); Professional staff (52.1 per cent, 592 out of 1,137); and Director level and above (2.7 per cent, 31 out of 1,137). Under the flexible working arrangements, the breakdown by gender for each option is as follows: staggered working hours: 59.7 per cent women (299 out of 501); compressed work schedule: 62.8 per cent women (240 out of 382); scheduled break for external learning activities: 56.1 per cent women (88 out of 157); and telecommuting: 58.8 per cent women (57 out of 97).

99. Although women at 60.2 per cent represent the majority of users within each option, they only constitute 35.5 per cent (11 out of 31) of users at the Director level, thus confirming the trend that the majority of the users at the Director level are men. The usage is equal, at 50 per cent each, for men and women at the Professional levels (296 out of 592) disproving the myth that flexible working arrangements are mainly for women. In the General Service and related categories, women represent 73.3 per cent of users (377 out of 514).

Page 42.

B. Department of Peacekeeping Operations/Department of Field Support

100. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations/Department of Field Support strive to improve gender balance through initiatives in the areas of staff selection policy, maternity leave policy, work/life balance and the promotion of a gender-friendly work environment. Programme Case Officers, who oversee staff section in the Department, receive a Guidance Note on "Advancing gender equality via the staff selection process" and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations/Department of Field Support have adopted a new policy to ensure that women on temporary or fixed-term contracts who take maternity leave have sufficient time after their return to compete on equal footing with other staff for a subsequent contract. In accordance with the Secretary-General's request to "embrace modern management methods and foster a healthy work-life balance", 31 the two Under-Secretary- Generals for Department of Peacekeeping Operations/Department of Field Support sent a note to managers on "Policies available to encourage work-life balance". The Department of Peacekeeping Operations/Department of Field Support also recently launched a participatory study intended to foster a working climate in which both men and women can achieve their full productivity and potential in a professionally respectful environment.

Page 44.

F. Informal barriers

104. Informal barriers are repeatedly cited by studies in the United Nations system as a strong factor impeding progress towards gender parity. Exit and annual surveys and other instruments are useful tools to identify and understand the issue in the broader scheme of the organizational culture and practice. Academic and empirical research shows that four major factors contribute to female attrition and require significant attention: (a) hostility of the work place culture; (b) a sense of isolation as one of the few, or only, females in the team; (c) extremely demanding tasks with long work weeks and very frequent travel; and (d) lack of sponsors for career advancement. An analysis of a non-mandatory web-based exit questionnaire in the United Nations Secretariat covering the period February 2007 to February 2008 with 513 respondents (27 per cent response rate) found that women were less satisfied than men with their work experience and development opportunities. However, both expressed the same level of satisfaction with conditions of service.

105. With respect to work/life balance policies, informal cultural barriers were repeatedly cited as impediments. For example, an analysis of the causes of slow advancement for women in the United Nations system in 2006 (see A/61/318) revealed that, despite progress made in establishing work/life balance policies, such policies were viewed by the informal managerial culture as a barrier to productivity and efficiency, incompatible with career advancement and performance in managerial level posts and applicable only to women.

106. Greater flexibility in work methods, expected to be incorporated in the upcoming gender strategy, should address some aspects of the issue. In addition, the Capital Master Plan and related high costs of relocation and rental of office space provide an opportunity and an incentive to encourage alternative workplace arrangements. Official calculations of the Capital Master Plan, for example, indicate that if 20 staff would share 10 desks by use of telecommuting, the

Organization would save over $1 million (approximately $105,000 per person). Some 3,000 staff are expected to be relocated, yielding cost savings of $10 million if only 200 staff (less than 10 per cent) would telecommute on a regular basis. No new policies would be required. Achieving that result would simply require management to make the use of existing policies.

G. Recommendations

107. The previous reports (A/59/357 and A/61/318) contained suggested measures for both the Secretariat and the United Nations system. In addition, the recommendations emanating from the Expert Group Meeting reported on in section IV above, in large measure, mirror them. Several of these are currently being adopted for implementation. During the present reporting period, however, the decisions of the Secretary-General emanating from his Policy Committee of 14 February 2008 have focused on the recommendation to strengthen the engagement, including messaging, of the leadership at the highest level, develop a gender strategy, institute a gender scorecard, enhance implementation of flexible work arrangements and fully implement the newly issued terms of reference of the focal points.

Page 45.

VIII. Conclusions

110. Impediments reported by United Nations organizations can be divided into seven broad categories: inadequate accountability, monitoring and enforcement mechanisms, lack of special measures for gender equality; the absence of, or weak, integration of focal point systems within departments; weak implementation of flexible work arrangements; insufficient outreach; low numbers of qualified women applicants; and lack of adequate data on the causes of high attrition rates for women.

115. Efforts must be made to overcome the United Nations system's informal organizational cultures which constrain the advancement of women staff. The implementation of flexible work arrangements and work/life policies and practices to ensure healthy work environments to enable women, and men, to perform their duties to their full potential is essential. These aspects have been stressed in reports and meetings of ICSC, CEB, the Expert Group on the status of women staff in the United Nations system, and responses to surveys conducted by the Office of the Special Adviser. One approach would be for each entity of the United Nations system to ensure the effective implementation of flexible working arrangements, including a strong communication campaign to raise awareness of this policy and to encourage all staff members, both women and men, to utilize it.

116. With respect to upcoming opportunity, almost all organizations will face a very significant number of retirements, creating an opportunity to considerably accelerate progress towards gender parity through the implementation of increased promotion and recruitment of suitably qualified women. As indicated by the surveys conducted by ICSC and the Office of the Special Adviser, it would appear that there is a growing realization that more rigorous implementations of both temporary special measures, (wherein as equally or better qualified women candidates must be selected) and flexible work methods, constitute a necessary, although

not sufficient condition, to accelerate progress, increase productivity and work satisfaction to attain and sustain gender balance. Strong and consistent messages to that effect from the top senior management would be required. In addition, in principle, temporary special measures may be applied to address gender under representation at the division and departmental level. The trend in several entities indicates that women, even when at decision-making levels, remain clustered more in support functions rather than line functions.

Improvement of the status of women in the United Nations system
Report of the Secretary-General - 7 September 2006 - A/61/318

Page 9.

III. Recent developments in gender balance policies in the United Nations system

A. International Civil Service Commission

8. At its sixty-third session the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) considered gender balance in the United Nations system on the basis of information gathered through a questionnaire and the statistical database of the Secretariat of the
United Nations Chief Executives Board for Coordination. Annex II provides an overview of the gender targets in 15 organizations and agencies of the United Nations system.

9. According to the ICSC report, with 18 out of the 23 entities surveyed responding, the most popular gender-related measures were work/life arrangements (summarized in annex III). While the promulgation of work/life policies is critical, it is also essential to promote a work culture that is supportive of such policies and facilitates the implementation of related measures.

B. United Nations Children's Fund study on gender parity

12. The Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) requested the Fund to address gender parity and to achieve the United Nations system-wide goal of parity by 2010. Consequently, in 2006, UNICEF conducted a study entitled "Gender parity in senior management at UNICEF". Based on statistical data, in-depth interviews and focus group discussions as well as exit surveys, the study found that several complex interlocking phenomena underlie the shortcomings in gender parity.

13. According to the study, the Fund performed well on women's representation at the P-1 to P-4 levels (46 per cent) and achieved a proportion of women representatives heading field offices (43 per cent), which reflects the overall composition of women in the international Professional staff (44 per cent).

Page 10.

14. At the P-5 to D-2 levels, however, the representation of women Professional staff remains well below parity, at 37 per cent. Factors cited as contributing to the gender imbalance were weak accountability mechanisms; lower numbers of female applicants for vacancies; relatively more stringent application (in many cases) of competency criteria to female candidates than to male candidates; the operation of informal parallel networks to which women have unequal access; and work environment factors related to work/family balance, workload, long working hours and a management culture that is not supportive of women.

Page 11.

IV. Analysis of the causes of the slow advancement in the improvement of the status of women in the United Nations system

A. Background and justification

18. In resolution 57/180, the General Assembly expressed regret that the goal of 50/50 gender distribution had not been met by the end of 2000.5 In particular, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to undertake further analysis of the probable causes of the slow advancement in the improvement of the status of women in the United Nations system. That analysis was conducted in two phases: phase I focused on the Secretariat, with findings reported to the Commission on the Status of Women at its forty-eighth session (1-12 March 2004) and to the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session (A/59/357); phase II, presented below, focused on the United Nations system, using a sample of four organizations (International Labour Organization, United Nations Development Programme, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and United Nations Industrial Development Organization) to reflect a contrast between field-based and specialist agencies, different regions and differing levels of representation of women.

19. The objectives of the analysis were to identify the relevant organizational and individual factors that influence gender balance within the United Nations system and to suggest measures to overcome the challenges hindering progress. The study incorporated an analysis of empirical data, human resources management policies and procedures, and individual perceptions of staff members.

20. While the present report highlights the major findings and conclusions of the analysis for phase II, both phases identified many common themes, which are indicated in the text of the report. It focuses on the challenges that must be addressed if the goal of gender balance is to be attained. Three key factors are highlighted. First, the need for a clear distinction between gender mainstreaming and gender balance. Second, the commitment at the highest level to institute positive and mandatory special measures. Finally, the institutionalization of clear mechanisms of accountability for gender balance. The present analysis is divided into nine areas: gender strategy; gender planning statistics; recruitment processes; selection processes; progress within organizations; development and career planning; mobility; working climate and culture; and accountability.

Page 16.

H. Mobility

36. In line with the results from phase I, a key and increasingly important component of career progression in all the organizations is the need for mobility across jobs, departments and duty stations. Phase II of the analysis revealed that women were disproportionately disadvantaged with respect to mobility owing to informal networking; the need to have a sponsor; inadequate proactive career planning; and family constraints. To facilitate career progression through mobility the suggested measures would include the following:

Measure 19. Review mobility conditions to ensure they address the needs of the staff and do not disadvantage women.

Measure 20. Promote and track inter-agency mobility.

Measure 21. Introduce a credit system of mobility that allows flexibility for staff at different life stages.

Measure 22. Create a remote support and advice system for staff posted to hardship duty stations.

Measure 23. Modify host country agreements to allow spouse employment for United Nations personnel.

I. Working climate and culture

37. Flexible work policies are essential for attracting and retaining high-quality female staff. However, the analysis revealed that, despite the progress made in establishing such policies, the informal managerial culture in all the organizations views them as a barrier to productivity and efficiency, incompatible with career advancement and performance in managerial level posts, and applicable only to women. Effective modalities for implementation of flexible work policies should be introduced so that staff and managers can make mutually suitable arrangements that meet the needs of both the office and the staff. Suggested measures would include the following:

Measure 24. Develop and promulgate multiple measures of productivity independent of the variables of time and physical location, based on output.

Measure 25. Foster an organizational culture, supported visibly by the senior management team, that advocates the benefits of a work/life balance for all employees, with a particular focus on managers.

Measure 26. Include gender-sensitivity indicators on fostering a healthy work environment conducive to a work/life balance in performance evaluations.

Measure 27. Incorporate into exit interviews gender-related indicators on separation and retention issues, work/life balance and managerial culture.

Page 29.

C. Work/life policies

2. Flexible working arrangements

74. The Secretariat introduced flexible working arrangements on 1 February 2003 (ST/SGB/2003/4), following a six-month pilot. The following options are available at the discretion of the programme manager: staggered working hours; a compressed work schedule

(10 working days in 9); and a scheduled break for external learning and telecommuting. The Office of Human Resources Management found that as of June 2004 some 2,410 staff members Secretariat-wide were participating in the arrangements (1,084 at Headquarters and 1,326 in offices away from Headquarters): 55.1 per cent women and 44.9 per cent men. An inter-agency work/life task force, chaired by the Office of Human Resources Management, found that while the situation was relatively encouraging, many managers and staff members did not know enough about the programme and the relevant guidelines. It was also reported that in a climate of particularly heavy workloads, flexible working arrangements were not always welcomed by managers and peers. The Office of Human Resources Management is conducting a new survey, to be completed

Page 30.

E. Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women

76. The Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women is a member of the Senior Review Group and provides names of qualified female candidates to the Secretary-General for high-level posts. Qualified senior level women are invited to submit their résumés for inclusion in a roster maintained by the Office of the Special Adviser for positions at the D-2 level and above. The Office of the Special Adviser, through the Office of the Focal Point for Women, also works with a global network of 60 focal points and alternates located in different departments and offices of the Secretariat to promote progress towards gender parity. In addition, the Office cooperates with relevant entities of the United Nations system to strengthen policy development and implementation in all areas with a bearing on the improvement of the status of women. Those areas include issues of relevance to conditions of employment, work environment, work/life balance, advocacy and outreach, and recruitment and retention.

Page 31.

VII. Conclusions

80. The lack of progress, even regression, since the previous report (A/59/357) requires a serious re-thinking of current policies in order to meet the gender balance targets of the organizations of the United Nations system, and also to make credible the commitment of the programme managers to that mandate.

82. The influence of the working climate and culture on career progression and productivity is clear. The analysis revealed that the objective of introducing work/life policies to attract and retain quality staff, especially women, has not yet had a positive impact on the current managerial culture, which continues to view those policies both as a barrier to efficiency and productivity and as incompatible with career advancement and the performance of managerial level posts. That attitude requires change. Where policies are in place they need to be better and more rigorously implemented and monitored, including through the insertion of a gender-sensitivity variable into performance appraisals of managers; where they are not, they must be promulgated in the interest of gradually creating a system-wide cadre of career civil servants and maintaining a modern and productive workforce.

Page 32.

88. The analysis carried out by the Office of the Special Adviser of the causes of slow advancement in the improvement of the status of women in the United Nations system revealed that gender imbalance is a multidimensional and systemic problem which requires a systemic and integrated response. Within the organizations of the
United Nations system, recruitment strategies, promotion and retention policies, career development, justice and anti-harassment policies, human resources and succession planning, work/family policies, management culture and mechanisms for accountability need to be reviewed to ensure that they do not directly or indirectly disadvantage women.

Annex III

Improvement of the status of women in the United Nations system
Report of the Secretary-General - 20 September 2004 - A/59/357

Overview of the representation of women staff at the Professional and higher categories in the United Nations system

Page 5.

11. UNICEF has been committed to achieving 50/50 gender balance by 2000 for women in Professional posts. To achieve the 50/50 target, an executive directive has been enforced since 2000, whereby the Deputy Executive Director reviews any recommendation for filling a Professional post with an external male candidate. A special programme has been created for women in leadership positions. UNICEF also conducts selected recruitment campaigns for women candidates through country and regional missions in developing countries for senior and middle-level Professional positions and seeks to ensure gender balance when nominating staff for inclusion in succession pools. Since 2001, a special programme has been designed to establish a pool of young talent, which specifically targets women. In terms of work/life and family-friendly policies, measures are in place to support spousal employment, as well as policies on maternity and paternity leave, adoption leave and alternative work arrangements.

Page 6.

12. In its gender balance policy, 2003-2006, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) reaffirms its commitment to achieving gender balance and sets the goal for achieving 50/50 gender distribution at all Professional levels by 2010.
Special measures to achieve this goal include a recruitment target of a 3:2 ratio of women to men in new hires. Female candidates are to be given preference where qualifications and experience are essentially equal. All decision-making bodies within UNDP are to have 50/50 gender balance. Moreover, issues related to work environment and work/life balance are addressed. Senior managers will be held accountable for the implementation of this gender policy.

14. UNHCR has introduced several measures to help to meet the goal of gender parity at each grade. The current policies include the reduction of seniority requirements at the P-3 level and above until gender parity is achieved and the expectation that managers take gender balance into consideration when selecting candidates. UNHCR is also focusing on the retention of women by introducing more flexible and family-friendly policies, such as the improvement of the policy on special leave without pay and inter-agency secondments or loans, as well as the adjustment of standard lengths of assignments.

16. UNESCO developed a plan of action on equal opportunities which included specific targets to be met by 2001: 50 to 60 per cent representation of women at the P-1 to P-3 levels; 30 to 40 per cent at the P-4 grade; and 20 to 30 per cent at the P-5 grade and above. As at April 2004, those targets had been met and/or exceeded. Women constituted 58 per cent at the P-1 to P-3 grades; 42 per cent at P-4; 33 per cent at the P-5 level and 22 per cent at the D-1 level and above. The organization has developed a set of family-friendly measures, including maternity leave; working hours for breastfeeding; paternity leave; adoption leave; parental leave; family

leave; and flexible work arrangements. UNESCO also provides childcare facilities at its headquarters for children from the age of 15 months.

Page 22.

C. Departmental focal points

79. The General Assembly, in its resolution 58/144, welcomed the commitment of the Secretary-General to better integrate the departmental focal points into the new staffing system (paragraph 5 (i)) and encouraged consultation between heads of departments and offices with departmental focal points on women during the selection process (paragraph 6 (e)). Given the delegation of authority to programme managers under the current system, the monitoring and advisory role of the focal points, as defined in the Secretary-General's bulletin ST/SGB/1999/19, has become restricted and lacks clarity. Therefore, the terms of reference of departmental focal points need to be adjusted to ensure the latters' effective role in establishing and monitoring the department's gender targets; advising on the selection of women candidates, contributing to the development and monitoring of the human resource action plans; and monitoring the implementation of work/life policies.

Page 23.

2. Flexible working arrangements

86. The Secretariat introduced flexible working arrangements as at 1 February 2003, following a six-month pilot. The following options are available at the discretion of the programme manager: staggered working hours, compressed work schedule (10 working days in 9), scheduled break for external learning and telecommuting.

87. As at June 2004, all but two departments or offices had implemented some form of flexible working arrangements. A total of 2,410 staff members Secretariatwide are participating in the arrangements.8 Staggered working hours (83.4 per cent) and compressed work schedule (14.6 per cent) constitute the two most used options. Telecommuting and scheduled break for external development activities constitute only 1.6 per cent and 0.4 per cent, respectively, of overall usage. The breakdown by category is: General Service and related categories (58.5 per cent); Professional staff (39.4 per cent) and Director level and above (2.1 per cent). Women constitute 55.1 per cent of users and the majority of users within each option. It is noteworthy, however, that at the D-1 level, where overall usage is only 2.1 per cent, the majority of the users are men (64.7 per cent).

3. Paternity leave

88. At its fifty-eighth session, the International Civil Service Commission decided that up to four weeks' paid leave for paternity purposes should be granted to staff at Headquarters and family duty stations, and up to eight weeks for staff at non-family duty stations.

Page 24.

F. Staff development: gender sensitivity training

89. The Office of Human Resources Management offers specifically tailored programmes dealing with diversity and gender issues in the workplace. A staff development programme on diversity, which included a module on gender issues, was delivered to all staff of the Security and Safety Service at United Nations Headquarters during the autumn of 2003 and has been revised for delivery to departments and offices upon request. During the reporting period, the United Nations Office at Nairobi offered two workshops on "Achieving work/life balance for men and women in the workplace" and "Avoiding burn-out and developing emotional intelligence for men and women in the workplace". In addition, all staff development programmes in areas related to leadership, management and administration address gender issues and support a gender-sensitive environment.

Page 25.

VI. Analysis of the causes of slow progress in the improvement of the status of women

96. To accelerate progress towards achieving the goal of gender balance, the General Assembly requested, in its resolution 57/180, that further analysis of the probable causes of the slow advance in the improvement of the status of women in the United Nations system be undertaken. Since, for financial and technical reasons, the analysis could not be completed for its fifty-eighth session, the Assembly reiterated its request, in resolution 58/144, that 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 be prepared, with a view to elaborating new strategies for achieving gender parity.

Page 26.

98. The present analysis covers six areas: recruitment and selection processes; progress within the Secretariat; accountability; working climate and culture; informal barriers to gender balance; and regional ability to meet the 50/50 gender distribution target.

103. Further research would be necessary to determine whether women from unrepresented and underrepresented countries and/or developing countries may be blocked from entry into the national competitive examination because of their restricted access to both the labour market and the Internet. In addition, the frequent allotment of P-2 posts across duty stations could constitute a limitation to the acceptance rates of P-2 posts by women, who may be more constrained by family and/or cultural issues. To increase the representation of women from unrepresented and underrepresented countries, the following recommended measure is under review:

Measure 1. Carry out an analysis of the national competitive recruitment examination post applications and acceptance rates of men and women by country to determine whether application and acceptance decisions manifest any gender-related trends.

Page 30.

2. Career progression for staff at the Professional levels and above

111. Career progression in the Professional category refers to both lateral and vertical career moves, which entails formal and informal processes that may affect women and men differently. The internal placement and reassignment practices within departments differ widely, as does the identification of posts available for promotion. More data is required to provide a comprehensive understanding of the nature of career progression within the Secretariat. To expand gender-disaggregated data on promotions, career progression and retention and attrition rates, the following measures are recommended for review:

Measure 11. Conduct a global comparative analysis, including biographical data, performance appraisal ratings, promotion rates, salary rises and assignments of women and men entering the Organization at different levels and within different time frames. Include staff on short-term appointments, consultants and individual contractors and track gender differences in recruitment levels, reappointments, retentions, grade progressions and mobility.

Measure 12. Incorporate gender-related indicators and questions on separation and retention issues, work/life balance and managerial culture into exit interviews.

Page 32.

D. Working climate and culture

116. Flexible work arrangements are key to attracting and retaining high-quality female staff. The analysis revealed that, despite the progress made, the current informal managerial culture within the Secretariat views flexible working arrangements as a barrier to productivity and efficiency and, more importantly, as being incompatible with career advancement and performance in managerial-level posts. Work/life balance is perceived as conflicting with the norm for career advancement at the United Nations Secretariat, which is to work long hours and always be available. Finally, the perception among managers that work/life policies apply only to women reinforces the stereotype that women are unable to participate fully in the workings of the system and are not fully committed to their careers. To promote and sustain the implementation and usage of work/life balance policies, the following measures are proposed for review:

Measure 26. With the assistance of departmental focal points, continue training in departments on gender sensitivity, work/life balance, etc., for all staff, with a focus on managers.

Measure 27. Foster an organizational culture, through intensified and continuing departmental training and advocacy by the Secretary-General, the Office of Human Resources Management, the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, senior managers and departmental focal points, that advocates

the benefits of gender sensitivity and work/life balance for all employees, with a particular focus on managers.

Measure 28. Develop and promulgate multiple measures of productivity independent of the time variable and based on output.

Page 33.

E. Informal barriers to gender balance

117. Barriers to career progression for women become more informal, and thus harder to identify, particularly at the more senior levels of the Organization. In order to effectively promote the advancement of women, informal barriers to career progression must be identified, analysed and removed.

2. Career progression

120. One significant barrier highlighted in the analysis is the presence of an organizational culture that may limit women's advancement. Aspects of this culture include long work hours, negative attitudes about work/life balance, perceptions of career timetables geared to a male life pattern, an ethos of presenteeism and a male-oriented style of management, communication and leadership. Another barrier is the presence of unspoken assumptions that women are not as acceptable as men in more senior, managerial and technical posts. In the Secretariat, this is reflected in the continued underrepresentation of women in the highest level of managerial and technical posts. A third barrier is the potential for systematic gender differences in performance ratings on evaluations. The analysis revealed that this discrepancy is often the result of greater interruptions to women's careers due to familial responsibilities and operates as an informal barrier in the sense that these ratings often determine levels of career advancement. A fourth barrier is the impact of informal networks. Women are often excluded from these networks, which facilitate the management of a positive impression and lead to more rapid career progression. To develop an organizational culture that is more inclusive of all staff, the following measures are recommended for review:

Measure 30. Integrate gender sensitivity aspects within the code of conduct, disseminate it extensively and ensure proper accountability mechanisms.

Measure 31. Develop and promulgate management principles that incorporate gender sensitivity dimensions.

Measure 32. Expand managerial and substantive training of women that better prepares them for managerial and/or technical positions.

Page 34.

F. Regional ability to meet the 50/50 gender distribution target

125. It emphasized the complex phenomenon of the “glass ceiling” for women in an attempt to explain what has kept the Secretariat from achieving the goal set by the General Assembly. While one of the obvious answers lies in more active recruitment, the problem of women’s underrepresentation is linked to many other factors, as compared to men. These include, inter alia, more limited access to the job market and web-based connections, formal and informal barriers, such as less-than- stringent adherence to gender balance policy, including special measures, and issues of organizational culture, including gender insensitivity, negative attitudes to work/ life balance and underdeveloped informal networks.

126. Pursuant to the specific actions that are proposed in the six broad categories enumerated above, the study affirmed that the most important critical success factor of the drive towards the 50/50 gender representation target was the personal commitment, evidenced through direct action, of the Secretary-General.

Pages 34-35.

VII. Concluding observations

132. To recruit and retain more women, many new initiatives and strategies to achieve gender balance, as illustrated in the relevant sections above, have been undertaken systemwide and at the level of the Secretariat. United Nations entities, including the Secretariat, are paying special attention to the identification of suitable women candidates, strengthening of recruitment sources for women, development of recruitment programmes in substantive areas, enhancing women’s career development, fostering attitudinal changes, introducing family-friendly policies, etc., in order to reach gender balance. In this regard it is noteworthy that under the reformed personnel system it is the head of department or office that has the primary responsibility for advancement towards gender parity.

133. Despite the significant gains achieved through these initiatives, United Nations entities, including the Secretariat, have a long way to go to effectively integrate gender balance considerations into institutional and attitudinal systems and human resources management policies of the Organization. The analysis carried out by the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women of the causes of slow progress in the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat revealed that gender imbalance is a multidimensional and systemic problem which requires a systemic and integrated response. As candidates for recruitment, women are discriminated against by external factors unfavourable to them, such as global limited access to labour markets, information and communication technologies, to technical and substantive training and education and to decision-making. Within the Organization, recruitment strategies, promotion and retention policies, career development, justice and anti-harassment policies, human resources and succession planning, work/family policies, management culture and mechanisms for accountability need to be reviewed to ensure that they do not directly or indirectly disadvantage women.

Page 37.

139. Another key component of career progression is the impact of the working climate and

culture. The analysis revealed that the objective of introducing work/life policies to attract and retain quality staff, especially women, has not yet impacted the current managerial culture within the Secretariat, which continues to view these policies as a barrier to efficiency and productivity and, more importantly, as incompatible with career advancement and the performance of managerial level posts.

Improvement of the status of women in the United Nations system Report of the Secretary-General - 17 September 2003 - A/58/374

Page 14.

D. Work/life policies

59. On 1 February 2003, flexible working arrangements were authorized in all departments and offices of the Secretariat. These new patterns of work offer greater flexibility in when and where work is done and provide arrangements that may lead to a better balance between professional and personal lives. They will also assist in attracting and retaining high quality staff, particularly women. The four options currently available to staff are: staggered working hours; a compressed work schedule (ten working days into nine); scheduled breaks for external learning activities; and working away from the office (telecommuting). In the coming year, the Office of Human Resources Management will monitor the implementation of these arrangements in departments and offices at Headquarters and in the field to ascertain the effectiveness of the programme. The Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women and the Focal Point for Women will continue to coordinate with the Office of Human Resources Management and the Work/Life Task Force to track the use of these arrangements.

Page 19.

78. The impact of the new work/life policies will need to be more closely monitored as borne out by recent findings of a preliminary survey by the Group on Equal Rights for Women in the United Nations. This will require more information and training of staff and programme managers to dispel misconceptions on the possible effects of work/life policies on productivity and effectiveness.

Improvement of the status of women in the United Nations system Report of the Secretary-General - 2 October 2002 - A/57/447

IV. Developments since 30 June 2001

Page 9.

D. Work/family agenda

43. A central goal of the Secretary-General's human resources reform is to enhance the mobility of staff between functions, Departments and duty stations. Hence, OHRM has undertaken a worldwide survey of international staff on work/life conditions of greatest concern to staff and which may impede staff mobility. The survey indicates that spousal employment restrictions pose a major constraint, particularly for dual-career couples. In addition, the report of the Joint Inspection Unit on young professionals in selected organizations of the United Nations system: recruitment, management, and retention (A/55/798) also identified spousal employment as one of the most critical of family support issues, having a direct impact on the ability of the organizations to retain and attract staff.

44. Measures to reduce current barriers to mobility have been proposed in the recent report of the Secretary-General, entitled "Strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change" (A/57/387). These measures include a review of arrangements between the organizations of the United Nations common system to ensure that spouses of United Nations staff are given favourable consideration for job opportunities within and outside the system in field locations. In this context, the Secretary-General intends to approach Governments to explore the possibilities for renegotiation of host country agreements.

Page 10.

45. The same report indicates that flexible working arrangements and part-time employment measures will be introduced to help staff balance their professional and private lives and assist to attract and retain quality staff, particularly women. A pilot exercise is under way in the Department for Disarmament Affairs.

V. Conclusions

Page 11.

56. In addition to the above, other partial and probable causes would include weak accountability mechanisms, attitudinal problems, merely rhetorical commitment to gender at all levels, inadequate spousal employment and work/life policy and its application, insufficient attention to career development, inefficiencies and delays of the internal justice system, technicalities of the recruitment, promotion and placement system, questions of attrition, especially at the mid-professional level, and variable quality and levels of departmental focal point representation. Each of these areas will need to be further analysed.