



STATEMENT BY MS. PRIYA DUTT, MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT AND MEMBER OF THE INDIAN DELEGATION, ON AGENDA ITEM 123 – HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT AT THE FIFTH COMMITTEE OF THE 63RD SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON NOVEMBER 14, 2008



We thank the Under Secretary-General for the Department of Management for her statement on the Agenda Item 123: Human Resources Management. We also thank the Under Secretaries-General for the Department of Field Support and for the Office of Internal Oversight Services; the Director of the Ethics Office and Chairman of the Joint Inspection Unit for introducing their relevant reports. We convey our appreciation to the Chairperson of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions for introducing the Advisory Committee's report. We welcome the presentation by the Staff representatives. My delegation aligns itself with the statement made by the distinguished Deputy Permanent Representative of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77.

The human resources of an organization largely determine its success or failure. In this age of rapid change, marked by new and emerging technologies, it is vital for the United Nations to have a well-trained, multi-skilled, and versatile workforce that is committed to and equipped for confronting the growing challenges and complexities confronted by the Organization. For this, it is important not only to recruit high-quality staff, but also to retain them and to provide motivation for continuous self-improvement and skill enhancement. These objectives can only be achieved through the collective efforts of the management and the staff, with unwavering support from Member States.

Given the critical importance of the human resources management reforms and the numerous proposals by the Secretary-General on the subject, some already approved and under implementation, others still being deliberated by the General Assembly; we are disappointed that the Secretary-General's report on Human Resources Management reforms (A/63/282) while providing an overview of and update on the implementation of the previous reform proposals, does not provide sufficient statistical data to substantiate the progress reported, nor does it include benchmarks against which progress could be measured. We also concur with the ACABQ that the report does not provide the financial implications of the proposed initiatives or clear timelines for their implementation. Above all, the report fails to analyze the interrelationships between the various human resources reform proposals that are interlinked and require synchronized implementation.

The Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM) is the pivotal entity in the UN Secretariat responsible for strategic human resources planning and policy development; interpretative guidance; and delegation of authority on human resources throughout the Secretariat. We commend the OHRM for its efforts despite the magnitude of its task and the relative scarcity of its resources. Nevertheless, we are troubled by the findings in the OIOS report on the in-depth evaluation of the OHRM (A/63/221), which underscores that the credibility of the staff selection process is not highly rated by stakeholders with regard to facilitating promotion opportunities, identification of highly qualified external candidates and support for geographical representation and gender balance goals. Furthermore, lengthy staff selection timeframes; lack of integrated approach to career development of staff and the failure of the managed mobility policy are the other areas of concern. We fully endorse the recommendations of the OIOS on the OHRM, especially the development of an integrated approach to enhance staff selection process, better support for career development and promotion of staff mobility; clarification and streamlining of delegation of authority and prioritization of the implementation of human resources reform initiatives. We are convinced that these measures would make a significant contribution in expediting and facilitating the effective and efficient human resources management.

We welcome the Secretary-General's intention to implement an integrated

workforce planning system through establishment of a Talent Management Framework. Though, we are surprised that in a large and geographically diverse international civil service like the United Nations, this was not done much earlier, as it would have addressed a number of challenges, such as expensive and time consuming recruitment process, high vacancy rates, succession planning etc. While implementing the work force planning system, it would be essential to install a robust monitoring system that would ensure accountability for departmental planning and performance, especially at the senior management levels. It would also ensure effective monitoring of the delegated authority in human resources, which has been highlighted by the OIOS as an area of serious concern.

On career development and support, my delegation is convinced of the importance of training for staff development. The United Nations should nurture talent, learning and professional development of its staff. However, training should not be an end in itself. It is a means to creating an effective workforce that is efficient, versatile and multi-skilled. We agree with the ACABQ that a more integrated, strategic and results-based approach to training, encompassing both headquarters and the field, should be adopted, which fulfills the emerging needs of the United Nations. Moreover, clear linkages should be made between training programmes and career paths and measures to identify and promote future leaders in the Organization, should be inclusive, transparent, non-discriminatory, merit-based. This would also hold true for the staff recruitment process at all levels, particularly the senior management.

We all agree that a credible, fair and fully functioning performance appraisal system is critical to effective human resources management. Various surveys conducted amongst the staff in the Secretariat have indicated a lack of faith in the existing performance appraisal system. In order to develop a culture of rewarding performance and penalizing under/non-performance in the United Nations, it is essential that appraisals accurately capture performance. We encourage the Secretary-General to expeditiously address the reported shortcomings in the existing performance appraisal system and establish clear links between performance and future career paths, as an important step towards rewarding excellence and strengthening accountability.

The streamlining of contractual arrangements and harmonizing the conditions of service, including for the UN field operations, are important issues pending with the Member States. We have to move with deliberate haste on these matters as they have a direct bearing on the overall functioning of the Organization. It is undeniable that having multiple contractual arrangements is inefficient. Similarly, having disparate compensation, benefits and entitlements amongst staff performing similar functions is not only unfair and unjust but also demoralizing. We look forward to a satisfactory resolution of these critical in the coming weeks.

The declared goal of the mobility policy is to develop a versatile, multi-skilled and experienced international civil service. Mobility is also expected to increase Secretariat's flexibility and responsiveness, improve its programme delivery capacity, and offer

increased staff development and career advancement opportunities. As reported by the Secretary-General, we have taken note of the difficulties experienced in the initial implementation of the "managed reassignment" programme. The OIOS has also been critical of the "managed reassignment" programme. In light of these experiences, we call upon the Secretary-General to undertake the proposed comprehensive review of the mobility policy, taking into account the lessons learnt from the managed mobility programme; the OIOS evaluation and the outcome of Staff Management consultations. While there are challenges in achieving the desired mobility outcomes, the eventual implementation of the mobility policy, if approved by the General Assembly, would have to be based on a clear definition of mobility and implemented in a fair, transparent and inclusive manner, encompassing all levels of the Secretariat.

On recruitment and staffing, my delegation welcomes the efforts of the Secretary-General to achieve the gender balance and geographical distributions targets, but calls for additional measures, including intensive outreach activities, to further ameliorate the situation, which is far from satisfactory. We also endorse the comments of the ACABQ on the pre-screened rosters as a tool for staff selection and on the broadening of the scope of the National Competitive Exams as a useful, objective and competitive tool for recruitment of highly qualified young professionals at entry level.

The Secretary-General has reported an increase in the use of consultants and individual contractors by 88.7% and 166.6% respectively, involving a combined expenditure of \$131.5 million during the reporting period. Moreover, majority of the consultants have been engaged for programme implementation and advisory services, which should normally be the responsibility of the regular staff. We firmly believe that the practice of hiring consultants should be restricted to only to those instances where the necessary in-house skills and expertise is not available. Meanwhile, factors contributing to the use of consultants should be identified and appropriate steps should be taken to address skill gaps within the Secretariat. However, if hiring of consultants becomes inevitable, we call for maintaining a balance in their geographical representation.

Before concluding, let me once again reiterate the importance of expeditious implementation of human resources management reforms in the United Nations. Especially, in view of the transformation of the United Nations from a conference servicing and meeting organizing body to a more field-oriented and operational Organization, which undertakes more and more complex tasks of peace & security and economic & social issues. We have to keep in mind that reform does not come free. Even if the initial costs seem considerable, over the long run this investment would reap high dividends in the form of more efficient and effective delivery of mandates and programme implementation. It is in our common interest to provide, in a judicious manner, the required resources for the implementation of this much needed and pressing reform.

Thank You !

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