



STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA BY MR. KARIM ISMAIL, FIRST SECRETARY, PERMANENT MISSION OF EGYPT TO THE UNITED NATIONS, ON AGENDA ITEM 141: HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT, AT THE FIFTH COMMITTEE DURING THE MAIN PART OF THE SEVENTY-THIRD SESSION OF THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY (New York, 15 November 2018)

Madame Chair,

1. I have the honor to speak on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. The Group expresses its appreciation to Ms. Martha Helena Lopez, Assistant Secretary-General, Office of Human Resources Management, as well as Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, the Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, for introducing their respective reports. The Group would also like to thank you, Madam Chair, for drawing the Committee's attention to the related report of the Joint Inspection Unit and the notes by the Secretary-General transmitting his comments and those of the UN System Chief Executives Board for Coordination on that report.

Madame Chair,

2. The Group of 77 and China notes that the Secretary-General presented a new global human resources strategy for the Organization for the period 2019-2021, setting out a series of objectives and strategy actions to transform human resources management in the Secretariat. The Group welcomes this important step, and looks forward to a productive discussion and thorough consideration, in order to ensure that the final outcome will effectively address persistent challenges, many of which have been repeatedly discussed in previous sessions.

3. The Group commends the ongoing efforts to reform the human resources management in the organization, which is key to the success of the overall UN reform efforts. We take note of the progress made since the seventy-first session, especially with regard to the simplification and streamlining of rules and policies and changes in the conditions of service, including the initiation of the first ever comprehensive review of the Organization's policy framework. Furthermore, we also welcome the steps taken to strengthen internal anti-corruption measures and to ensure a safe environment for staff to report misconduct, as well as efforts to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment in the workplace.

4. The Group believes that the United Nations must be premised on a geographically diverse and gender-balanced, international and talented workforce that is truly representative of all the peoples that the Organization serves. The principles of equitable geographical representation and gender parity are corner stones to the G-77 and China. We are encouraged by the progress made by the Secretary-General to improve gender parity, including having the first ever gender equal senior management composition early in the year. However, much more needs to be done.

5. On the other hand, persistent imbalance in equitable geographic representation in the Secretariat remains a major concern to the Group, especially given the reference in the UN Charter (paragraph 3, Article 101) to "the importance of recruiting staff on as wide a geographical basis as possible". We deem this principle essential for ensuring the international character of the Organization, and that it truly represents all its member states. We urge the Secretary-General to step up his efforts towards achieving equitable geographical representation including

representation of TCCs/PCCs across the UN staff, especially at senior levels.

The Group notes the analysis of regional diversity contained in the Secretary General's report on the reform overview, and that he has included an indicator of regional diversity in the Senior Managers Compact to measure progress. The Group will carefully examine how this concept may improve geographical representation. We continue to believe that there is an urgent need for a comprehensive strategy, based on an in-depth analysis of the real causes of the current imbalances, with concrete actions and detailed benchmarks and timelines to rectify gaps and address shortfalls, in line with previous GA resolution, including 69/572 and 71/557.

6. Furthermore, there is a need for more transparency on how geographical representation is measured, and the basis for such assessment. In particular, the General Assembly needs more complete and more easily understandable information on how gender parity and geographical representation are reflected in the 38,000 posts across the Secretariat, and not just a far narrower base of over 3,000 posts that are tracked for geographical representation, as covered in the reports. The Group would pay close attention to these issues in the coming consultations.

7. In this regard, The Group will carefully examine the proposals put forth by the Secretary-General on the system of desirable ranges, with a view to ensure that the best interests of Member States and the United Nations would be served, in a manner consistent with preserving the international character of the Organization.

Madame Chair,

8. The Group of 77 and China is concerned that the average age of a Secretariat staff members continues to reflect an upward trend, and that the entry level positions, particularly at P1 and P2 levels continues to fall, which limit the space for achieving important human resources targets, including the rejuvenation of the organization and acquiring fresh talents from the different regions of the world, along with the Young Professionals Programme which should focus on candidates from unrepresented and underrepresented developing Member States, in order to truly achieve its goals.

9. The Group welcomes the implementation of the new criteria for the use of the Field Service category, as recommended by the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC), and endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 72/255. We also welcome the work of the Commission together with the UN Secretariat and other field-based organizations to improve the conditions of service for staff serving in hardship locations, where the extreme hardship conditions and absence of basic necessities of life prevent the internationally recruited staff from bringing their family members.

10. Despite the progress made regarding the health and well-being of the UN staff, the Group expresses serious concern over health care provision for staff in field duty stations and stresses the need to further improve their access to staff counselling and to improve the management of sick leave.

11. We are also of the view that an efficient and a timely recruitment process is important for enabling the Organization to attract and acquire qualified workforce. While we note the proposal presented by the Secretary General regarding posting period of job vacancies, we believe there is a need for improvement in every stage of the recruitment process, as well as the current practices for roster management.

12. Furthermore, we wish to reiterate that language skills constitute an important factor in the selection processes, and the need to respect the equality of the two working languages of the Secretariat, and that good command of the official language in specific duty stations should be given due consideration during the recruitment process. We further reiterate our serious concern that efforts made to reach out to potential candidates from unrepresented and underrepresented countries, including developing countries, had not been successful.

13. Turning to the report of the Joint Inspection Unit which reviews internship programmes in the UN system as part of the ongoing reform of human resources management in the Organization. The Group is of the view that introducing measures in support of youth from developing countries would respond to the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Youth, as well to the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development related to youth, decent work and gender equality.

14. We note that most of the recommendations contained in the previous JIU report 2009/2 have not been implemented, and we reiterate the need to implement those recommendations. The present JIU report proposes a benchmarking framework for good practices in internship programmes to ensure that inclusive internship policies do not leave anyone behind but rather provide equal access to candidates from all socioeconomic backgrounds, with due consideration paid to gender, disability and geographical diversity. The Group believes this is important for the reform of internships across the system so that youth from developing countries will have equal opportunity and equal access.

Madame Chair,

15. In conclusion, the Group of 77 and China intends to engage actively in the upcoming consultations with a view to ensure continuous progress in the implementation of the human resources reform initiatives to build a strong and forward-looking Organization that thrives in a challenging and fast-changing environment. The Group believes that the reform of the human resources function is a key pillar of the overall reform of the United Nations.

Thank you, Madame Chair.

