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Abbreviations

ACC	Administrative Committee on Coordination
APB	Appointment and Promotion Board
APC	Appointment and Promotion Committee
APP	Appointment and Promotion Panel
ASHI	After Service Health Insurance
BMAC	Buildings Management Advisory Committee
BMS	Buildings Management Section
CAC	Commissary Advisory Committee
CATAC	Catering Advisory Committee
CCAQ	Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions
CCISUA	Coordinating Committee for International Staff Unions and Associations of the United Nations System
FICSA	Federation of International Civil Servants' Associations
ICSC	International Civil Service Commission
ILOAT	Administrative Tribunal of the International Labour Organization
JAB	Joint Appeals Board
JAC	Joint Advisory Committee
JAGGO	Joint Advisory Group on Garage Operations
JDC	Joint Disciplinary Committee
OHRM	Office of Human Resources Management
OIOS	Office of Internal Oversight Services
PAS	Performance Appraisal System
SMCC	Staff Management Coordination Committee
UNAT	United Nations Administrative Tribunal
UNJSPB	United Nations Joint Staff Pension Board
UNJSPF	United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund
UNSCV	United Nations Staff Council at Vienna
VBOs	Vienna-based organizations

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INTRODUCTION

The past year was meant to be a year of reform of the United Nations, including reform in the area of human resources management. The UNOV Staff Council expressed their full support for the Secretary-General's vision on several occasions and in different fora. The year also witnessed the establishment of a Task Force on Human Resources Management Reform, and the setting-up of five working groups under that Task Force. UNOV staff representatives contributed indirectly to those working groups by participating actively in the discussions and negotiations of the XXIInd meeting of the Staff-Management Coordination Committee (SMCC), held in May 1998. Hopes were high, and staff representatives were anxious not only to reform the Organization, but to transform it into a caring employer with strong mandates and staff who would strive for excellence.

Of utmost concern to staff representatives world-wide, in the context of the reform, is the establishment of clear and concrete accountability measures. It is indeed astonishing that the United Nations has managed to function for over 50 years at such a low level of accountability. The results of the effort made by staff representatives at SMCC-XXII to develop specific mechanisms of accountability and a set of internal monitoring tools and control procedures were forwarded to OHRM's Working Group on Staff Administration for further elaboration and inclusion in the Secretary-General's report on human resources management, to be submitted to the General Assembly. However, the report still falls short of describing the essential mechanism that is required - a mechanism to analyse the quality of decisions, and actions to be taken when those decisions are faulty or improperly motivated. Staff representatives are thus disheartened that, a year later, little to no progress has been achieved, and that the forthcoming XXIIIrd session of SMCC will again be concerning itself with the issue of having to establish concrete accountability mechanisms.

Despite a clearly stated agreement at SMCC-XXII that any further delegation of authority should be postponed until a system of proper accountability measures was in place, such further delegation was implemented effective 1 February 1999. The then President of CCISUA and President of the New York Staff Committee strongly protested against that managerial decision, pointing out that, without concrete and clear mechanisms for monitoring and accountability, staff will not be managed well and will not have the means to obtain redress of decisions, nor will there be a consistent application of entitlements across all departments of the Secretariat.

At the local level, UNOV staff representatives were equally anxious to ensure that decisions taken by the Director-General of UNOV and Executive Director of ODCCP under his delegated authority, particularly in the area of human resources management, be transparent and that, once the restructuring of the Drug Control Programme and the Centre for International Crime Prevention had been completed, he would delegate authority to programme managers and establish clear reporting lines. At an informal meeting with the Director-General, the Staff Committee also voiced the anxieties of ODCCP staff regarding the lack of transparency in the restructuring process.

At a meeting of the Executive Director with the staff of the Crime Branch, and at his meeting with staff at large, held on 3 December 1998, staff were assured that the initial phase of restructuring and reassignment of staff, which had not only created a high degree of disruption of work, but had also

compounded the staff's frustrations, anxieties and fears, was over and that staff could look forward to the early establishment of a situation of normalcy.

The Staff Committee had additional informal meetings - with the ASG for Human Resources Management, the USG for the Office of Internal Oversight Services, the Chief of the JAB/JDC Secretariat at Headquarters and various members of the UNOV administration - at which delegation of authority, accountability and management problems in ODCCP were discussed. One of the main issues focussed on the with ASG for OHRM was the fear of staff that if too much authority was delegated away from the centre, without clear rules of accountability first being in place, the result might be egregious abuses.

Despite these various contacts and representations, very little seems to have changed. An atmosphere of anxiety and uncertainty which is debilitating and demotivating hangs over us. Due to the fear experienced by many staff, the Council has difficulty in addressing this all-pervasive problem. Clearly, it is incumbent on management to take decisive steps to ameliorate the situation, for the good not only of the staff, but also of the Organization and its work.

Staff representatives have constantly emphasized the need for transparency in decision-making relating to staff. Transparency means, among other things, not only applying the stated rules and policies consistently, but ensuring that there is a general perception that this is being done. The Council's fervent hope is that staff-management collaboration will be concentrated in the coming year on achieving this goal, which is the one thing above all others that could improve our work and our workplace.

In view of the above statement of facts, and considering the widely prevailing demotivation and fatigue of staff, UNSCV doubly appreciates the cooperation of all those many colleagues who, to a large extent in their own time, have contributed to the work of the Council and to the effectiveness of staff representation - staff nominees on joint bodies and working groups, the Polling Officers, the Auditors - and the staff at large for their continued support, also by becoming dues-paying members of the Union.

I. REVIEW OF STAFF COUNCIL ACTIVITIES

1. During the first year of the seventeenth session of the United Nations Staff Council at Vienna, a total of 16 regular meetings were held. Only some of the issues before the Council which are thought to be of major interest to the staff at large are reported on in detail in this chapter. Other items on the Council's agenda that are not mentioned elsewhere in the report included: financial matters, including the decision to invest some of the Council's assets in short-term bonds; performance appraisal system; outsourcing; an amendment to the rules on the provision of legal aid from the UNSCV Staff Defense Fund; OHRM's skills inventory; and placement and promotion issues. Also, at most of its meetings, the Council faced the challenge of having to submit nominations for one of the many statutory or other joint bodies.

2. In addition, the Council was consulted and expressed its position on most of the items before JAC, CCISUA and SMCC. Furthermore, staff representatives were kept informed of, and gave their views on, issues before joint VIC bodies such as those for catering, commissary, garage operations, and the child-care centre.

3. Unless expressly declared as closed or confidential, Staff Council meetings can, in principle, be attended by any staff member, as an observer, should he/she have a particular interest in some of the agenda items. The Staff Council will, from now on, post the provisional agenda of its meetings on its cc: Mail bulletin board. For the past years, the minutes of Council meetings have been posted regularly on the cc: Mail bulletin board, so that anyone who wants more detailed information can access it easily.

A. THE UNOV INTERNAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

1. Joint Appeals Board (JAB)

4. In February 1998, the JAC had agreed to increase the size of the Vienna JAB by two members each from staff and management, and to have a panel of four chairpersons. As announced in last year's report, elections for the two additional staff representatives on JAB were held in May 1998, and the names of the successful candidates (Jean Datta and Valerie Lebaux) were announced by the Polling Officers' desk-to-desk circular of 21 May 1998. Names for additional chairpersons were submitted by the Staff Council. The enlarged Board has taken office, although its new composition has not yet been announced by an information circular.

5. In the course of the past year (March 1998 to March 1999), the Vienna JAB issued reports on 12 appeals cases. Two cases were successfully conciliated, three cases are currently under conciliation, and another three cases are pending before the JAB.

2. Joint Disciplinary Committee (JDC)

6. During the past one-year period, the Committee has not been seized with any disciplinary case.

3. Panel of Counsel

7. The annual statutory meeting of the Panel of Counsel was held in June 1998, chaired by the Coordinator and attended by the majority of Panel members and the President of the Staff Council. The discussions were devoted to ways by which to improve and strengthen the role of the Panel of Counsel. Several suggestions were made which are under active consideration. One point of importance would be to increase the number of members in order to be able to offer prompt assistance from a wider field of expertise.

8. During the year under review, Panel members were mostly involved with mediation and conciliation matters dealing with contractual status, promotion issues, performance evaluation, end of service allowance and misunderstandings with supervisors.

9. All Panel members except for one agreed to continue serving for another year. In June 1998 a desk-to-desk circular was issued urging staff members to volunteer for Panel of Counsel membership. Unfortunately the circular did not yield any results, so the plea is hereby reiterated to staff members or retirees to volunteer for membership.

B. STAFF WELFARE BODIES

1. Staff Welfare Fund

10. During 1998, the newly established Staff Welfare Board held four meetings. The Staff Welfare Board provided financial support from the Staff Welfare Fund of ATS 60,892 for UNOV/ODCCP participants to the 1998 Inter-Agency Games. Furthermore, a grant of ATS 4,054 was awarded to the VIC Child Care Centre for the acquisition of playing equipment. The Staff Welfare Board also received requests from the UNOV Staff Council, and in reviewing these against the main criterion for subsidization - that the meeting or workshop attended should deal with substantive issues affecting staff at large - agreed to subsidize these with a total amount of ATS 88,991. The Staff Welfare Board also discussed upcoming welfare projects such as the expansion of the VIC Child Care Centre. For more details on the latter project, see section I.

2. Staff Assistance Fund

11. At 28 February 1999, there were 125 outstanding staff assistance loans. For comparison purposes, at the end of February 1998, there were 100 outstanding loans for UNOV/ODCCP staff.

12. The Board decided that the criteria for obtaining a loan would remain the same as those applied by the former joint UNOV/UNIDO Board. However, the access to loans for staff on fixed-term contracts has been facilitated as the length of the payback period may be extended beyond the expiration date of the contract, by applying the amount of any outstanding repayment to the entitlement under the end-of-service allowance.

3. Staff Benevolent Fund

13. In the course of the past year, the Trustees of the Staff Benevolent Fund have approved three grants, totalling ATS 95,000. One of these cases had been carried over from the previous joint UNOV/UNIDO Board.

C. CLASS ACTION APPEAL TO THE ADMINISTRATIVE TRIBUNAL ON THE LANGUAGE FACTOR IN GS SALARIES

14. The deadline for filing the appeal by UNOV staff members against the abolition by ICSC of the language factor in GS salaries had been extended pending a decision on the parallel case in Rome. Although the Rome staff won their case, the United Nations declined to treat the decision as a precedent. Therefore, UNOV staff were obliged to file, as were IAEA staff. After much discussion and investigation, it was determined that, since IAEA and UNOV use different Administrative Tribunals, the only safe approach was for UNOV and IAEA staff to file separate cases. Both retained the services of the leading attorney with vast experience in representing staff before the Administrative Tribunals. As a result, UNOV was able to negotiate a relatively reasonable fee, which is to be paid out of the Staff Defence Fund.

15. The appeal of IAEA staff, submitted to ILOAT, is already at an advanced stage. It is hoped that the Tribunal will adjudge the case during its fall 1999 session. The appeal of UNOV/ODCCP staff will be submitted to UNAT on 30 April 1999.

D. TRAINING

16. The Council had a number of discussions on training, and was critical of the lack of transparency in the planning of the training programme, which should be designed to benefit as many staff as possible. The Chief of the Staff Development and Training Unit attended a Council meeting in September 1998 and briefed the Council in some detail on the procedures he followed in developing his training plans.

17. The Council strongly reminded him of the requirement that there should be consultation between staff and management on training issues. Throughout March 1999, staff representatives have been consulted on the implementation of training plans at the work unit level. The Council also urged that UNOV should arrange for staff to have full access to the IAEA Learning Resource Centre, or else set up a parallel facility. It took note with interest of the plans for introduction, in fall 1998, of an induction course for new staff. However, to date no induction courses have been held.

18. Persistent problem areas in connection with training are the lack of guidance for individual staff members who would like to receive training to further their career development prospects, and the need for a policy regarding the training on the Internet (distance learning) that is now being introduced. In view of the many open areas of concern, the staff representatives have asked that training should be placed on the agenda of the JAC as a major issue in 1999. For more details, see chapter II, Section G.

E. PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL SYSTEM

19. The Council had numerous discussions on the PAS, in particular in connection with the failure to implement it properly or indeed at all in some areas. Of special concern was the

retroactive implementation in ODCCP, which involved fixing objectives *ex post facto*, after two years had elapsed. Instances of interference by the Management Review Committee in the ratings given by supervisors, on the basis that they were perceived to be too generous, also gave rise to strenuous objections by the Council, which were reflected in discussions at the JAC. In response to an information circular that the Council saw as being designed to encourage across the board lower ratings by managers, potentially leading to a most regrettable demotivation of staff, the President wrote a letter to the Director-General, expressing the Council's concerns.

20. In addition, the Staff Council's deliberation acknowledged that the numerous managerial changes and restructuring in UNOV/ODCCP made the implementation of PAS difficult and, in many cases, nearly impossible (multiple supervisors during the reporting period, supervisors moved to field assignments, etc.). Furthermore, discussions of the Staff Council included the need for management to review the utility of PAS and the possibility of reverting to the previous PER system.

21. The UNOV PAS Rebuttal Panel, established in December 1997, has so far received one rebuttal case.

22. To set up a UNDCP Rebuttal Panel (for the 1996 and 1997 PAS cycles) and a ODCCP Rebuttal Panel (for the 1998 and 1999 PAS cycles), the Polling Officers organized elections in October 1998, and communicated the results to staff at large by their desk-to-desk circulars of 2 and 19 November 1998 respectively. Already in April 1998, the Staff Council agreed to the Panel of Chairpersons, proposed by management. Both Rebuttal Panels still have not been established.

F. FLEXIBLE WORKING HOURS

23. Problems relating to the administration of flexible working hours in UNDCP were brought to the Council's attention. The Council felt strongly that the scheme should be applied uniformly to all staff, and that exceptions to the rules should only be made on the basis of objectively well documented service requirements. It should be up to the JAC to decide on uniform rules that would be applied throughout UNOV/ODCCP. The matter was brought to the JAC, which decided to revive the JAC working group on flexible working hours. To give the working group a basis for its assessment of the flexible working hours rules, which were still provisional, two similar questionnaires were circulated, one by management to managers, and one by the Council to staff at large. The 365 replies received from staff are being tabulated and analysed, and discussions in the working group will continue when the analysis has been completed.

24. Staff representatives also requested, at the 83rd JAC meeting held in August 1998, the implementation in UNOV/ODCCP, on a trial basis, of the two options for alternative work schedules, endorsed by SMCC XXII, which are:

(a) A compressed work schedule, allowing staff to work:

- (i) 80 hours biweekly in 9 workdays with one Friday or Monday off; or,
- (ii) 40 hours per week in 4 workdays with one day off;

(b) A part-time work arrangement whereby staff will work 80 per cent of the normal workweek, and be remunerated at 80 per cent of their emoluments.

Management said that it wished to clarify the implications of the SMCC decision with Headquarters, New York. So far, staff representatives have heard no more on that issue. At the CCISUA Assembly, staff representatives learned that the 80 per cent work option has been implemented in Geneva.

G. CONTRACT INTERIMS

25. At the request of the Council, the President approached the Acting Director, DACS, and put to him the problem of contract interims, in other words, of staff carrying out continuing functions against temporary assistance funds who found themselves in the position of working, sometimes for weeks or months, without having a valid contract, because allotments had not yet been received from Headquarters. Apart from the anxiety suffered by the staff concerned, legal questions arose, and the fact that staff continued to be paid during the interim did not solve the problem. In response, the Acting Director of DACS devised a procedure for extension of such fixed-term appointments, under specified conditions, for up to two years. The Council notes that the new arrangement is a big improvement over the past. However, the improvement is a relative one, considering that many of the staff concerned have been performing core functions for years, so that the ultimate solution must be the establishment of posts to accommodate them.

H. FOCAL POINT FOR WOMEN

26. In the spring of 1998, the Council were asked to nominate a new Departmental Focal Point for Women, following the resignation of Ms. Brigitte Doering. In that connection, the terms of reference for the Focal Point were discussed, and reservations were expressed at the fact that the function seemed to be looked upon as a spare-time activity. At the request of the Council, the President wrote to the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women, urging the need for a full-time Focal Point. In the interim, however, the Council did make a nomination. However, after a long delay, the candidate was declared by the Headquarters administration to be unsuitable owing to a conflict of interests concern. In February 1999, the Council recommended the nomination of Ms. Doris Buddenberg, and her designation was announced by UN/INF.53-ODCCP/INF.52 of 11 March 1999.

I. EXPANSION OF CHILD CARE CENTRE

27. It is well established that the VIC child-care centre, which provides for 23 places for children aged 0-3 years to the whole of the VIC, is grossly inadequate to the needs of staff. A project for the expansion of the child-care centre has long been under consideration by the Joint Advisory Committee on the VIC Child-Care Centre. During the year, it became known that the VIC child-care centre might qualify for substantial subsidies being provided by local authorities. As the availability of a viable child-care centre is both an established feature in the modern workplace and a step toward ensuring gender equality, the Staff Council felt that management should do all in its power to ensure that the facility is expanded.

28. An agreement in principle to pursue the project has been reached at the JACs of IAEA and UNOV, and UNIDO is considering the issue. Actual construction of the extension is expected to start in March 2000. Construction should be completed by December 2000. The Staff Council recommended that UNOV's share of the cost after deduction of the subsidy be financed out of the Staff Welfare Fund, which can be done without prejudicing staff members' access to loans from the Staff Assistance Fund. It is essential, however, that the three VBO administrations

should agree to continue, as in the past, to defray the running costs of the expanded facility (e.g., heat, light, water). The latter issue will be on the agenda for negotiation at the JAC in April 1999. Another concern of staff is that the deadline of mid May 1999 for the submission of the building plans and cost estimates to the Austrian authorities be met, as otherwise the award of subsidies would be lost.

J. ASBESTOS CONTAMINATION

29. Throughout the year, the Council's Working Group on Occupational Health and Safety was very active in pressing for information on the health hazards represented by asbestos present in many parts of the VIC structure. Towards the end of 1998, staff were informed that a plan was being devised jointly by the administrations of the VBOs and the Austrian Government to remove all the asbestos from the VIC. The staff representatives in the JAC insisted that they should be kept abreast of all developments, and assurances were given to that effect. A business plan is being prepared for the asbestos-removal project, and the Council expect to have the opportunity to comment on the aspects that will affect the wellbeing and working conditions of staff. For a position of CCISUA on the asbestos problem, by which also the building of Headquarters, New York, is affected, see chapter III, section G.

K. VIC CATERING SERVICE

30. In December 1998, the staff representatives on the Catering Advisory Committee (CATAC) reported that the UNIDO management was contemplating giving notice to the current catering agent by the end of the year in order to terminate the contract by the end of the first quarter of 1999, although it was due to expire in any case at the end of 1999. The Staff Committee reacted vigorously, conveying to UNIDO management its misgivings about a hasty and unprepared change of caterers, which might leave staff in the lurch, without catering facilities, since the required bidding exercise could not be properly completed at such short notice. The plan was abandoned, and preparation of the normal bidding exercise should have started. However, since January 1999, no CATAC meeting has been convened.

L. NON-SMOKING POLICY

31. The Council was consulted by the administration in the spring of 1998 concerning the possibility of restricting smoking in the VIC to a greater extent. It discussed the draft circular that had been submitted to it for comment, but was unable to reach a unified view. Consequently, the Council decided to mandate its representatives in the JAC to take a neutral stance on the proposed arrangement, which was to have been promulgated jointly by all the VIC-based organizations.

32. Nothing more was heard of the arrangement, but in early 1999, the administration requested the Council's comments on a proposal to separate the smoking and non-smoking areas in the coffee bar on C07. The Council agreed to the proposal, which has been implemented.

M. STAFF SERVICES OFFICER

33. The Staff Services Officer had been financed jointly by the three Staff Councils in the VIC, and had been supervised by the UNIDO Council. In the spring of 1998, the UNIDO Council decided stop

supervising the service and to withdraw support for it. After some inconclusive discussions had taken place among the three Staff Council Presidents, the UNOV Council decided to continue supporting the Staff Services Officer, only on behalf of dues-paying UNOV Staff Union members. In February 1999, the CTBTO Staff Council decided to contribute towards supporting the service so that it could be available to CTBTO staff.

N. HOUSING SERVICE

34. It will be recalled that the UNOV administration withdrew from participation in the IAEA Housing Service as of 31 December 1997. UNOV staff continued to have access to the Housing Service operated by the UNIDO Staff Council. However, that Service was discontinued by the UNIDO Council in mid-1998, leaving staff with no assistance in locating housing under reasonable terms. Despite energetic representations made by staff representatives in the UNOV JAC, it was not possible to obtain any meaningful assurances from the administration on this matter. The Presidents of the UNOV and UNIDO Staff Councils negotiated an arrangement with the IAEA Housing Service, under which staff could make use of the Service by defraying the cost out of their own pockets. For UNOV staff, the arrangement took effect on 1 October 1998. At the beginning of 1999, its functioning was assessed by IAEA, and the decision was taken to continue it indefinitely.

O. UNITED NATIONS INTERREGIONAL CRIME AND JUSTICE RESEARCH INSTITUTE (UNICRI)

(This section was submitted by the UNICRI staff representatives)

35. The United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI), which was set up in 1968, receives no funding from the regular budget of the United Nations and is totally reliant on extra-budgetary funds from Member States, first and foremost Italy. Thus, all UNICRI staff are on fixed-term appointments.

36. The UNICRI Officer-in-Charge recently stated that the date for the proposed move to Turin has tentatively been scheduled for October 1999. Over the years, a series of steps have been taken aimed at obtaining the necessary funding to implement the decision regarding this move, which was made by the then Secretary-General in October 1992. On 20 January 1997, a law was passed by the Italian Parliament providing for funds to refurbish and maintain new premises for the Institute in Turin. However, there have been more than ten unofficial dates for the move since 1993 and, considering the very special contractual situation of all UNICRI staff and the lack of precise information regarding the move, Management has stated that it is not in a position to implement UN staff rules and regulations on contract extensions.

37. Further, given the 1999 contractual situation (one year fixed-term appointments for Professionals and short-term renewals of varying numbers of months for General Service staff, reflecting the varying relocation dates), management will have – once again – the widest possible choice in renewing and relocating any (or none) of the current staff members. The envisaged relocation - together with the restructuring exercises undertaken by Management during the last five years - has resulted in a steady downsizing of staff. In January 1994, the Institute's staffing table included 36 staff members, while only 18 members currently appear in the 1999 budget estimates document. The downsizing has been exacerbated by UNICRI's budgetary constraints, which are the upshot of management's inability over the past few years to augment the funds available to meet staff costs and general operating expenses.

The Institute has thus reached an all-time low with regard to staff morale, resulting from a situation in which there is no guarantee for any staff member of future work prospects, let alone of a minimum level of job security.

38. In the light of the above, the staff representatives of UNICRI have continued to urge management to take steps in order to ensure that, in line with the global UN policy and goals of the Secretary-General:

- Existing human resources are utilized to the maximum extent possible;
- Consultations with staff representatives are further developed;
- Opportunities are provided for professional and career growth and development;
- Fair and transparent policies to support staff in all aspects of their work are ensured.

39. More specifically, during the 9th UNICRI Board of Trustees Meeting (November 1998), staff requested that, without any further delay:

(a) Alternative strategies be pursued and measures adopted in order that non-renewal of contracts does not become the only possible means to match revenues and costs, or take place as a consequence of changes in management;

(b) Staff members be provided with a firm written statement concerning the modalities of, and timetable for, the move to Turin, taking into account relocation problems, and recruitment and training that may be necessary, and giving current staff members at least six months notice so as to organize their professional and personal lives;

(c) A written contractual policy be at last drawn up, so as to avoid the contractual discrimination and inequalities that have arisen in the past between professional and general service staff at UNICRI.

(d) During the above-mentioned Board of Trustees Meeting, the Officer-in-Charge: *“gave his assurance that UNICRI will return to a firm contractual policy once it is located in Turin and this would be in line with UNOV’s practice of offering two-year appointments.”*¹

40. In line with the 100-series staff rules (governing the General Service staff at UNICRI) and the 200-series staff rules (for Professional staff), the staff representatives now call – once again - for a written commitment by UN management finally guaranteeing a clear UNICRI contractual policy.

P. VIC OPEN HOUSE DAY

41. Open House Day, organized under the lead of UNIS, took place on 18 October 1998. The Council was represented on the Coordination Group by a member of the Staff Committee. The Council made a

¹ / As per Proceedings of the Ninth Regular Session of the Board of Trustees.

financial contribution to defray the cost of the obligatory stand-by ambulance service on the day and to obtain materials for the children's corner. In addition, it provided volunteers to sell tombola tickets before and on the day, and also contributed to the tombola an amount of ATS 23,000, representing the remaining funds from the 1997 tombola.

42. In view of the part it had played in the arrangements for the tombola, the Council was deeply distressed to learn that the lion's share of tombola earnings (ATS 75,982 out of ATS 113,663) had been diverted to defray the cost of assigning a staff member temporarily to the project. Unfortunately, the President's attempts to ascertain how this had occurred were turned aside with a cold shoulder.

43. The Council considers it unacceptable that funds which had been intended for NGOs implementing drug-related projects should have instead been used to pay for a staff member. The Council believes that it is the administration's obligation to rectify the matter.

Q. CELEBRATION OF UNITED NATIONS DAY

44. United Nations Day, which falls on 24 October, was celebrated on Friday, 23 October. As has become the custom, UNSCV made the arrangements for refreshments in the Rotunda and coordinated the special international gourmet event in the cafeteria with the Catering Service. The cost was shared, as in the past, with the IAEA and UNIDO Staff Councils.

R. CHARITABLE DONATIONS

45. Following the tradition established in past years, the Staff Council decided to make a contribution of ATS 200,000 to Hope 87, an Austrian charity which specializes in implementing grass-roots projects in developing countries.

46. In response to the need felt by the Staff Committee to be able to commit contributions, without a decision by the whole Council, whenever emergency situations, such as floods and earthquakes arose, the Council decided to amend its financial rules to authorize the Committee to make charitable donations up to a maximum amount of ATS 5,000 for each cause, subject to a fiscal year cumulative limitation of AS 20,000, without prior approval by the Council.

S. 1999 INTER-AGENCY GAMES

47. It had been planned that UNIDO and UNOV would co-host the 1999 Inter-Agency Games. In mid-1998, the Council was informed that the UNIDO Staff Council had decided not to serve as co-host. The UNOV Council decided that it was not in a position to provide the input that would be required to serve as sole host. There was some discussion of the possibility that the UNOV administration might co-host with the Council, if the Games could be used as part of a campaign for sports against drugs. However, since that idea was not taken up by the administration, the UNOV Council was obliged to decline to play any part in organizing the Games, which will therefore not take place in 1999.

T. BLUE DANUBE RADIO PETITION

48. The President was contacted by a representative of BDR, informing her that there were plans to curtail BDR's programme as part of an economy drive in the Austrian Radio and Television Service. In view of the interest that many staff members had in BDR's foreign-language programming, the Council decided to join with the other Councils in the VIC to circulate a petition, expressing concern about the future of BDR. A total of 1,200 signatures were collected throughout the VIC, and the petition was sent to the Austrian Chancellor and Foreign Minister. A reply was received from the Chancellor, giving assurances that, although the programme was being refocussed to appeal more to its target group, there was no question of discontinuing BDR, and that foreign language programming would continue to predominate under the new arrangements.

U. VIC STAFF COMMITTEE

49. Informal meetings were held between the Staff Council Presidents of the Vienna-based organization to coordinate positions on issues of common interest in a spirit of close cooperation. Items discussed were: expansion of the child care centre; review of the composition of the VIC-Recreation Committee; commissary issues; opting out of the unemployment insurance; official holidays, permanent residency; visa/legitimation card problems; staff services; housing issues; and United Nations Day celebration.

II. JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE (JAC)

50. During the reporting period, between March 1998 and March 1999, only three meetings of the Vienna Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) were held. No meetings were held between August 1998 and January 1999. This was attributable to two circumstances:

(a) When the term of office of the JAC expired in June 1998, no agreement was reached for some time on the new nominations submitted by management, as they were not in accordance with the

terms of reference of the JAC. That issue was settled in October 1998, and the new composition of the JAC was announced on 19 November 1998 by UNOV/INF.48 - ODCCP/INF.47;

(b) Due to the sudden passing away of the Secretary of the JAC, Peter Frank, management had to find a replacement.

It is now intended to revert to regular monthly JAC meetings.

A. STAFF COUNSELLING SERVICE

51. The Staff Counselling Service was cost-shared between UNIDO and UNOV management, until 31 June 1998, when UNIDO management decided to discontinue its funding. The UNIDO Staff Council then agreed to take over the UNIDO share for the period from 1 July to 31 December 1998, as a stop-gap measure. It was therefore anticipated that, as of January 1999, the Service could be in a precarious financial situation.

52. Staff representatives voiced their concern about the stability of the then existing arrangements and urged management to place the Service on a sounder financial footing. In that context it was suggested that the management of the Provisional Technical Secretariat of CTBTO should be approached with a cost-sharing proposal. Despite all efforts, staff representatives were informed in January 1999 that, as neither UNIDO nor CTBTO management could be motivated to cost-share the Service, the number of hours of coverage by the Service would have to be reduced by 50 per cent, from 20 hours a week to 10 hours a week, and that, consequently, the contract of one of the counsellors would not be renewed in 1999.

B. ANNUAL STAFF RECOGNITION PROGRAMME

53. As reported last year, the JAC had elaborated a scheme for a staff recognition programme, and had submitted its proposal to the Director-General in November 1997, with the recommendation that such a programme should be introduced. Unfortunately, this programme still has not gotten off the ground. The original proposal was returned to the JAC in August 1998, with the request that the proposal to establish a separate joint body dealing with the selection of teams to which awards would be given should be reconsidered. At its January 1999 meeting, the JAC agreed to serve as the selection body, and a draft document amended accordingly was adopted, for onward transmission to the Director-General.

C. SPOUSE EMPLOYMENT COORDINATOR

54. At the 1997 session of SMCC, it had been recommended that every duty station should nominate a spouse employment coordinator, within existing resources, to assist mainly spouses of newly recruited or transferred expatriate staff members in finding employment. Staff representatives drafted the terms of reference for a coordinator and submitted them to JAC.

55. JAC found that it was unrealistic to absorb the large number of responsibilities, as outlined in the staff's paper, within existing resources. Management analysed the tasks and made a counterproposal, indicating which tasks were already being performed or could be performed by UNOV administrative officers, which could be handled in cooperation with the local labour office, and for which someone - possibly a volunteer - would have to be found. It was agreed that management would continue its efforts

to establish terms of reference for the functioning of such a service and, eventually, when clear responsibilities had been established, to issue an information circular and ensure that new staff members were informed of the service available to their spouses.

D. BANKING IN THE VIC

56. Since it was announced that staff had the option to arrange for their salary to be deposited in a bank of their choice outside the VIC (procedure outlined in circular UNOV/INF.10 - ODCCP/INF.9 of 24 February 1998), only some 20 staff members have availed themselves of the possibility, despite the fact that a great deal of interest had been expressed in the option. It is believed that the reason for the lack of response is the greater convenience of the in-house banks.

57. The IAEA and UNIDO managements do not wish to abrogate existing arrangements with the Credit Anstalt and Bank Austria. In view of the lack of support from the other VIC-based organizations, the UNOV management is very reluctant to consider installing a fourth bank in the VIC, since it is not believed that there would be enough customers to make an additional banking operation viable.

58. In order to make the existing United Nations Federal Credit Union operation in the VIC a more viable option, it will open offices on the first floor of C-building (in the "pope's balcony"). In addition, since the CA and Bank Austria obviously have 'captive' customers, the Staff Council will in 1999 make an effort to negotiate better terms for staff at large.

E. JOINT UNOV/UNIDO JAC ON HEALTH INSURANCE

59. When the JACs of UNOV and UNIDO met on 14 December 1998, they had before them a report of the Working Group on After Service Health Insurance (ASHI), which had been established in December 1997 to elaborate proposals for achieving:

(a) More equitable sharing of the premium burden between active and retired staff, and among retirees with varying lengths of contributory service;

(b) Stabilization of the whole plan through a broader income base, which is important in view of the expected long-term increase in the ratio of retirees to active staff;

(c) Reduction of the sharp drop in premium on changing from active participation of ASHI (despite evidence which shows that participants aged 51 and above incur more medical expenses than younger participants);

(d) Reduction of the negative premium/reimbursement ratio of the ASHI participants;.

60. The joint JAC agreed to the following recommendations presented by the ASHI Working Group:

(a) Effective 1 January 1999, to introduce a minimum notional pension of 25 years contributory service in UNJSPF as a basis for the calculation of ASHI premiums:

(b) To raise the minimum period of participation in the insurance plan for ASHI eligibility from 5 to 10 years for new participants commencing or recommencing participation on or after 1 January 1999;

(c) To introduce a minimum period of co-insurance of two years prior to the staff member's retirement, as eligibility criteria for dependent's ASHI coverage. In order to allow staff who will be retiring soon and have not yet enrolled their dependents in the medical insurance plan sufficient time to do so, the new condition will enter into effect on 1 April 2001.

F. OFFICIAL HOLIDAYS IN THE YEAR 2000

61. Management raised issue of the official holidays for 2000 early (at the January JAC meeting) to ensure that the holidays would not again be announced as late as they were at the end of 1998, owing to problems of inter-VBO coordination, so that staff would be able to make their plans for the 1999 end-of-year (millennium) holidays well in advance.

62. JAC reached agreement on the proposed 10 holidays, and management has undertaken to coordinate with the other VBOs. It is hoped that the information circular will be distributed in good time.

G. INCREASING THE EFFICIENCY OF JAC MEETINGS

63. It was decided to streamline the work of the JAC by establishing working groups in which both staff and management would be represented to consider major issues such as training and career development, social security, flexible working hours, asbestos and related environmental issues, which would develop recommendations for the JAC, thereby reducing the need for fact-finding, long discussions and negotiations, and enabling the JAC simply to approve proposals put to it by its working groups. When this arrangement takes effect, it is planned to hold monthly meetings, with a limited number of agenda items. The Council urgently needs volunteers, from among staff at large, to lead the working groups on training/career development and on social security.

64. Staff representatives introduced a proposal for revising the procedure for nominating members to joint bodies, along the lines of the procedure followed at Headquarters. It was agreed to identify those joint bodies to which the proposed nomination process appeared to be applicable and, subject to confirmation from OHRM as to the way nominations were managed at Headquarters, to bring the staff proposal to the attention of senior management in Vienna. Unfortunately, nothing more has been heard from the management regarding this proposal since August 1998.

H. OTHER JAC ISSUES

Security in the VIC

65. At the 85th meeting of JAC, held on 26 February 1999, and following a request of staff representatives, the JAC was briefed by the Chief, UNSSS, about the situation on 18 February 1999, when Kurdish demonstrators had succeeded in entering the VIC. While staff representatives appreciated that no staff member was harmed or taken hostage on 18 February, they informed the JAC of the staff's reactions, complaints and fears, and transmitted the UN Staff Council's request - which was shared by the Staff Councils of the

other VBOs - that a meeting be held with staff at large, at which UNSSS would explain existing security measures. UNSSS was also asked to prepare a check list reflecting how staff members should behave in a crisis situation, not only to avoid interfering with security action, but also to ensure their own personal safety.

66. The JAC agreed to the staff's proposal to hold a meeting to which all VIC staff would be invited, no later than four weeks after the incident, in order to take advantage of the then existing atmosphere of concern regarding security to maximize attendance.

67. Although the Staff Council sent a reminder on 1 March 1999, no such meeting has so far been arranged.

*Anyone interested in more details on JAC issues is welcome
to come to the Staff Council office and to read, or request a copy of, the JAC minutes.*

III. COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR INTERNATIONAL STAFF UNIONS AND ASSOCIATIONS OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

(CCISUA)

68. The fourteenth Annual Assembly of CCISUA was held at Addis Ababa, from 24 to 31 March 1999. UNSCV was represented by Gerda Hasanat (President) and two Council members: Angelo Estrella-Faria, and Roger Kaminker. The following is an account of the discussion on the main issues that were on the agenda of the Assembly.

A. THE NEW CCISUA BUREAU

69. In accordance with the CCISUA Statutes, whereby the presidency and vice-presidency rotate between New York and Geneva, Ms. Mehri Madershahi, President of the United Nations Staff Union in New York, assumed the position of President of CCISUA. The Vice-President of CCISUA is now Mr. Jacques Vigne, Executive Secretary of the Geneva Coordinating Council. The Presidents of the UNOV and ECA Staff Councils were elected Second and Third Vice-Presidents of CCISUA, respectively.

B. REVISION OF THE STATUTES

70. As mandated by the 1998 CCISUA Assembly, the Bureau had circulated prior to the Assembly a proposal for a revision of the CCISUA Statutes, aiming at an increased “democratization” of CCISUA by allowing for elections of the President and Vice-President instead of automatically rotating these positions between New York and Geneva. The Assembly modified and added to the proposal made by the Bureau, and adopted by a two-thirds majority vote the following major changes to the Statutes:

(a) The President and First Vice-President are to be elected from among the Executive Heads of the New York Staff Union and the Geneva Coordinating Council;

(b) The Second and Third Vice-President are to be elected from among the Executive Heads of the Staff Unions and Associations comprising the remainder of the CCISUA membership;

(c) A procedure is established for the removal of any Bureau member who ceases to enjoy the confidence of the CCISUA members.

71. The amended Statutes will become effective 30 days after their adoption.

C. RETURN TO ICSC

72. It may be recalled that, at its 1998 meeting, the CCISUA Assembly decided that non-participation in ICSC should remain in effect and that the two CCISUA members of the Working Group on the Consultative Process and Working Arrangements of ICSC should be present as “non-participating observers” during the discussion of the agenda item relating to the consultative process at ICSC’s 1998 spring session.

73. As a result of the decisions taken by the 53rd session of the General Assembly on the recommendations of the Working Group on the Consultative Process, staff representatives noted some limited improvements in the procedures of ICSC. The XIVth CCISUA Assembly, therefore, debated the value of renewed participation in ICSC, considering the following:

- (a) To test the effectiveness of ICSC in implementing the new procedure;
- (b) To demonstrate to Member States the sincere efforts of CCISUA to make the system work;
- (c) To be actively and formally engaged with ICSC during the work of the Review Group proposed by the Secretary-General, for the improvement of ICSC; and, most importantly;
- (d) To influence changes, through participation - also in ICSC’s working groups - that would yield concrete, positive results for the staff.

74. The UNSCV representatives then made a proposal to end the boycott of ICSC, however indicating that CCISUA’s resumed participation should be evaluated by the Bureau against a set of specific and realistic objectives. The XVth CCISUA Assembly, to be held in March 2000, would then assess whether participation in ICSC during 1999 had borne any fruit and decide on future action: either continued participation or resumption of the boycott.

75. During the subsequent vote, the overwhelming majority of CCISUA members opted for ending the boycott of ICSC.

D. PREPARATION FOR SMCC XXIII

76. In preparation for the XXIIIrd session of SMCC, tentatively scheduled for July 1999 in New York, the Assembly first reviewed the status of implementation of agreements reached at the previous session. It was found that many of the agreements and recommendations were still under review by various working groups established under the Task Force on HRM reform; others were being implemented or partially implemented depending on the duty station, and very few had been fully implemented. The CCISUA President was asked to undertake the necessary follow-up action.

77. The Assembly then developed a draft agenda for SMCC XXIII, on which it decided to place the following main items:

- (a) Accountability mechanisms and standards in the context of delegation of authority;
- (b) Administration of justice;
- (c) Recruitment and placement;
- (d) Career development, mobility and promotion;
- (e) Occupational health and safety;
- (f) Conditions of service.

78. Two working groups on career development, mobility and training - one for GS staff, the other for P staff - prepared resolutions that were adopted by the Assembly, and which will serve as a backbone for position papers to be submitted to SMCC XXIII. The same goes for a further resolution on accountability of managers in human resources management. To enhance the staff's papers to be presented at the next SMCC, the Assembly decided to engage consultants who would elaborate proposals for (a) mobility and (b) accountability mechanisms and standards.

79. The preparation of position papers on other agenda items will be shared by several duty stations.

E. EFFECT OF DEVALUATION OF LOCAL CURRENCIES ON PENSION BENEFITS

80. A silent protest of some 50 ECA staff, holding up placards which drew attention to the dramatic erosion of pension benefits over the past five years, due to the devaluation of the Ethiopian Birr, affecting GS and National Officer staff, some of whom have seen their pension benefits reduced to one-third, left its impression on the Assembly when it started discussion of the matter, which was also of concern to other duty stations, such as Nairobi and Bangkok.

81. A working group was set up to study the issue in depth and to make concrete proposals for a swift remedy of the situation. The working group diagnosed a series of shortcomings with regard to the monitoring of the issue by the CCISUA Bureau:

(a) The issue had not been given the attention it deserved at the SMCC XXII session held in May 1998;

(b) It also had not been sufficiently reflected in the report of SMCC XXII;

(c) The problem had not been discussed at the July 1998 Pension Board meeting at Vienna; and

(d) It had not been drawn to the attention of ICSC.

82. Based on the findings of the working group and a related resolution, the Assembly mandated the CCISUA President to:

(a) Place the issue on the agenda of the April 1999 session of ICSC and to inform the Commission that the new methodology for determining the salaries of local staff may have unacceptable negative consequences for the pension benefits of staff in soft-currency duty stations. A methodology to correct the erosion of pension benefits should be developed;

(b) Place the issue again on the agenda of SMCC and to ensure that the chief executive officer of the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund be invited to attend the meeting;

(c) Propose to the Pension Board an extension of the period over which the final average pensionable remuneration is calculated from the best 36 months out of the last five years of contributory service, to the best 60 months out of the last eight years, or, should this not be acceptable, to urge the Pension Board to propose another implementable solution on an urgent basis;

(d) Request the Secretary-General to intervene on behalf of the affected staff.

83. In the event that no remedial action can be taken by the Pension Board and ICSC, the Secretary-General should be requested to submit the matter, urgently, to the 54th session of the General Assembly.

84. Finally, the President was requested to enter into collaborative discussion and action on the issue with the President of FICSA, to the mutual benefit of the staff represented by both federations.

F. INTERNAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

85. At the XIIIth CCISUA Assembly, in 1998, a resolution had been passed on the establishment of a Working Group to consider in depth the administration of justice within the United Nations system and to submit proposals for reform for consideration by CCISUA at an appropriate stage. Subsequently, an agreement was reached at SMCC XXII to establish a joint staff/management working group to review the same issue.

86. Given the fact that, for lack of follow-up, the internal CCISUA working group had not met since the XIIIth Assembly, the issue of the administration of justice within the United Nations system was again considered at the XIVth Assembly. The Assembly requested representatives of the New York, UNOV and ECLAC Staff Councils to formulate proposals for the Assembly's consideration.

87. The representatives of the designated staff councils drew up a list of the main shortcomings found in the existing system, including problems such as: lengthy, cumbersome and unclear procedures; lack of relevant expertise in JAB panels in some duty stations; non-binding nature of JAB recommendations and even of some types of judgements by the Administrative Tribunal; lack of appropriate legal advice for staff members; low ceilings of compensation for damages; deficient procedures for handling disciplinary cases; duplications of review bodies; and lack of minimum qualification requirements for members of the Administrative Tribunal.

88. Against the background of the deficiencies found in the internal justice system, over which the XIVth Assembly expressed its deep concern, it adopted a resolution that, *inter alia*, confirmed the establishment of an internal CCISUA working group (parallel to the joint working group to be established within the framework of the SMCC) to consider in depth the administration of justice within the United Nations system and to submit proposals for reform for consideration by CCISUA at an appropriate stage. The Working Group was requested to consider, in particular, the following issues:

(a) Streamlining the terms of reference and rules of procedure of the JAB, taking into account best practices in handling labour-related disputes under national administrative law;

(b) Procedures for investigation of alleged instances of waste, fraud or abuse by OIOS that ensure that the rights of staff members are fully respected;

(c) Procedures and rules for the conduct of disciplinary proceedings, including rules on taking and validity of evidence;

(d) Composition, appointment and qualifications of the members and the chairpersons of the JAB and JDC;

(e) Composition and appointment of the Panel of Counsel and qualification of its members;

(f) Appointment, qualifications and terms of reference for the Secretary of the JAB and the JDC;

(g) Feasibility of making the JAB and the JDC decisions final, without prejudice to direct appeal by either party to UNAT;

(h) Feasibility of reducing the number of special appellate bodies within the Secretariat and merging their competence with the jurisdiction of the JAB;

(i) Appointment and qualification of the members of UNAT.

89. The President of CCISUA was requested to submit periodic reports on the implementation of the resolution.

G. ASBESTOS CONTAMINATION AS A SERIOUS HEALTH AND SAFETY ISSUE

90. Concern was expressed by the President of CCISUA about asbestos contamination in the Secretariat building in New York. It appears that the problem in New York had not been recognized as a serious issue and is still not being dealt with in a comprehensive or even professional way.

91. The concern by staff about the situation in New York and the grossly negligent and irresponsible attitude prevailing in Vienna over the course of almost two decades were discussed. The point was made that, approximately 18 months ago, as a result of pressure brought to bear by the UNOV Staff Council, the situation had improved significantly and the Buildings Management Service of UNIDO was seriously addressing the problem.

92. Another point that was discussed was that, since a decision had been reached to remove the asbestos from the VIC, the staff were concerned about the approach that would be used and health/safety consequences.

93. A resolution was adopted which calls on both the Secretary-General and the Director-General of UNOV to ensure that the problem of asbestos contamination in both duty stations be addressed in a comprehensive, responsible and professional way. In particular, the Director-General of UNOV is being requested to retain an independent medical consultant and an independent asbestos safety expert, who should cooperate to ensure that the safety of staff is guaranteed during the asbestos decontamination work. Furthermore, the Assembly requested the Bureau to arrange for a comprehensive report on the environmental conditions in the affected duty stations and to place the issue on the agenda of SMCC XXIII.

H. ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

94. Aware of many shortcomings in the past with respect to a systematic follow-up to CCISUA Assembly decisions and resolutions, the Assembly decided that the first substantive item on the agenda of each Assembly should be a report by the Bureau on the implementation status of previous decisions, recommendations and mandates.

95. As the basis for the introduction of increased accountability of the Bureau, the Assembly established a work programme for 1999, which also served as an input in drawing up the 1999 budget.

96. A thoroughly familiar, yet unresolved, issue was once more addressed by the Assembly: the reinstatement of the post of a CCISUA Research Officer, which was withdrawn by the Administration as from 1 January 1996. The President was mandated to ensure the preparation of a job description for such a post, including level, qualifications and selection criteria, and to redouble efforts to have the position restored, as soon as possible, through further negotiations with the Administration and in SMCC.

97. Also, to add more strength to the decisions taken by the Assembly, it was agreed that a copy of the report of the Assembly should be transmitted to the Secretary-General.

I. FINANCIAL MATTERS

98. It should be noted that since the inception of CCISUA, and particularly from 1990 onwards, the New York and Geneva Staff Unions have been contributing the lion's share to the CCISUA budget. The assessed yearly contribution of New York and Geneva is US\$ 50,000 each, while all other members contribute a relatively small amount, UNSCV's assessed contribution being US\$ 5,000 per year.

99. Representatives of several duty stations, including Vienna, were alarmed to gather from the Treasurer's report that over 90 per cent of the CCISUA budget for 1998 had been spent on travel, although provisions had been made for research and consultancies, legal representation and the issuance of CCISUA public information material, including a periodical. However, none of the latter activities had been pursued by the Bureau.

100. Also, the Assembly discussed a lack of a proper mechanism for the monitoring of CCISUA funds, with respect to the Treasurer's ledger, the financial report and the budget.

101. A working group on administrative and budget matters was set up, and its recommendations, which were unanimously adopted by the Assembly, included provisions aimed at establishing and streamlining procedures, clarifying the responsibilities and accountability of the Treasurer, the Finance Committee and the Bureau, and enhancing the transparency of financial and budgetary issues.

102. Concerning the collection of contributions, it was decided that arrears would be collected before 31 July 1999; effective 1 January 2000, contributions not paid before the deadline will be subject to interest at the rate of 5 per cent.

103. The Assembly then adopted the Treasurer's report for 1998 and established a budget for 1999. Members of the Finance Committee were elected, and the Treasurer was re-elected for an interim period.

J. OTHER MATTERS

1. Staff members of ECA evacuated outside their duty station

104. Participants in the CCISUA Assembly had received a letter, written on behalf of the expelled ECA staff, in which they appealed for sustained support of their cases from all Staff Unions and Associations. The Assembly adopted a resolution in which concern was expressed about the suffering caused to the evacuated staff and their families and appreciation was voiced for the efforts being made by the Secretary-General to alleviate their hardship. The Secretary-General was requested to explore with the heads of the other UN agencies concerned the possibility of absorbing those staff members.

2. Staff representatives on the Pension Board

105. Concern was voiced by the representatives from several duty stations that colleagues who were candidates for election by the staff as their representatives on the Pension Board were often completely unknown. The Assembly emphasized the importance of electing representatives who were fully aware of the concerns and issues that staff wanted to bring to the attention of the Board. The CCISUA Bureau was therefore asked to act as a clearing house for potential candidates and to inform all duty stations of their assessment of nominees prior to an election.

IV. STAFF/MANAGEMENT COORDINATION COMMITTEE (SMCC)

106. The XXIInd session of SMCC took place in Bangkok, from 25 to 29 May 1998. UNSCV was represented by Gerda Hasanat (President) and Helena Harmer (staff representative).

107. SMCC-XXII has been termed the “Reform SMCC”, because most of the issues on its agenda dealt with the human resources management (HRM) reform of the United Nations. It had before it a series of

papers prepared by the five working groups established under the Task Force on HRM reform: staff administration; recruitment and placement; human resources planning; staff development, performance management and career support; and conditions of service. Staff representatives also had submitted papers on many topics.

108. It was agreed to establish two working groups, to each of which a share of the HRM reform issues was allocated. Follow-up items from the previous SMCC meeting and other additional items were discussed in the plenary.

109. Although it was decided that the recommendations of the Bangkok meeting, as approved by the Secretary-General, would be made known to staff at large through an information circular, such circular has not yet been issued. The full text of the SMCC-XXII report is available through your staff representatives. A number of issues that may be of direct interest are discussed below.

A. DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

110. The aim was to recommend specific mechanisms of accountability and the kind of internal monitoring and control procedures required. First, a number of administrative issuances were reviewed to clarify the different levels of authority that existed in the Organization; to distinguish between different types of decisions (direct application of rules, discretionary decisions, exceptions to the rules); and to establish what significant delegations of authority had already been granted to offices away from Headquarters. From a discussion of the inter-relationship between responsibility, authority and accountability emerged the need to: (a) assess whether the current delegations of authority were functioning properly; (b) provide managers with standard operating procedures to ensure consistency and coherence in the implementation of delegated rules and procedures; (c) clarify the “chain of command”, as the current multiple-level system of authority and decision-making obscured individual responsibility.

111. Monitoring tools and control procedures were presented in tabular form, including 360° review and team reviews of performance as well as mechanisms for resultant actions (recognition, corrective measures, sanctions). SMCC recommended that the findings be forwarded to the Task Force’s Working Group on Staff Administration, for inclusion of the relevant parts in the Secretary-General’s report to the General Assembly.

112. It was also recommended that, within the context of accountability, managers be instructed to take the necessary measures, including initiating an investigation when appropriate, in cases of reported misbehaviour by a staff member under their supervision, whether such action by the staff member concerned took place in the performance of his/her duties or outside the workplace in cases which brought the Organization into disrepute.

B. ACCOUNTABILITY IN THE APPEALS PROCESS

113. With the aim of delegating to managers increased responsibility for reviewing and, as appropriate, for correcting or defending their own administrative decisions as they affected staff who had brought appeals, SMCC agreed that the following procedure should be put into effect on a pilot basis, for six months, and be closely monitored by the Administrative Law Unit (ALU) and OHRM:

- (a) ALU would continue to receive requests for administrative review;
- (b) ALU would first determine the type of administrative decision for which the review was requested:
 - (i) If the decision was of a discretionary or managerial nature, the case would be referred to the decision-maker for review and preparation of any response to the JAB;
 - (ii) If the decision involved application or interpretation of a rule, under Staff Rule 111.2, the ALU would advise on those aspects.

114. It was further agreed that the results of the pilot project would be shared with staff representatives. Staff representatives have been informed that, in February 1999, the new procedure has been introduced at Headquarters, New York.

C. RECRUITMENT, PLACEMENT AND PROMOTION

115. The objective was to develop a system of recruitment and placement which was fair, timely, simple, cost-effective and transparent, and which would empower managers to deliver programmes, while fulfilling General Assembly mandates and establishing clear lines of accountability. In considering the issue, the following points were made, which exemplified the lack of trust in the existing process and the need for transparency and clear policies:

- (a) The central processing and rostering of unsolicited applications did not appear to be completed in a manner that identified qualified candidates for posts within the Secretariat;
- (b) Criteria for placement and promotion were sometimes not fully respected, resulting in undue weight being given to managers' opinions, which might be unrelated to the relevant criteria;
- (c) External candidates were sometimes selected to the detriment of fully qualified staff members who had been waiting years for a promotion;
- (d) Job descriptions and vacancy announcements were sometimes tailored to fit the qualifications of preselected candidates;
- (e) Vacancy announcements were occasionally published for posts that were already encumbered.

116. Among the many recommendations made were the following important ones:

- (a) Measures to ensure the accountability of managers should be a precondition for decentralization of recruitment and placement. Monitoring should be improved by developing performance indicators against which to assess managers in their respective departments and/or duty stations;
- (b) To issue guidelines for prompt advertisement of vacant posts, sufficiently in advance to allow for succession planning. If the post was encumbered, this should be indicated in the vacancy announcement;

- (c) To develop generic job descriptions to the extent possible;
- (d) To review the system of joint bodies and assess the advisability of having only one joint body;
- (e) To establish a set of guidelines for situations in which encumbered posts did not need to be advertised.

117. Also, many staff representatives consented to the management's proposal to abolish the collateral review and pre-review letters in the promotion process. However, the New York staff representatives objected to it and their formal objection was placed on the record of SMCC XXII. SMCC agreed that the Working Group on Recruitment and Placement of the OHRM Task Force on Human Resources Management should again review the proposed procedures for placement and promotion.

D. INCOMPLETE RECORD OF PERFORMANCE

118. To ensure fairness in the assessment of staff by appointment and promotion bodies, it is important that the files of such staff members should not have gaps concerning their performance. SMCC agreed that:

(a) If in the course of the review by an A&P body a gap was found to exist, the A&P body concerned would give the staff member in question the benefit of the doubt and consider his/her performance as fully satisfactory;

(b) Once OHRM received applications for a vacancy, if the file of an applicant was incomplete, OHRM would inform the staff member's executive officer in order to ensure that the supervisor completed the PAS evaluation.

E. CONTRACTUAL ISSUES

119. It was agreed that individual staff members should be informed officially and promptly of any changes in their post incumbency. This would ensure that, whenever staff members were placed against temporarily funded posts, they would be aware of that action and its consequences. Representatives of several duty stations reported cases where, without their knowledge, staff members were placed against posts funded by general temporary assistance. When the funding was depleted, then the staff members' fixed-term appointments were not renewed.

F. ST/AI/415 ABOLISHED

120. At the request of the staff representatives, management agreed to abolish this administrative instruction on the redeployment of staff, as it was agreed that it should never be used again for redeployment purposes. It may be recalled that this administrative instruction was the issue of a Tribunal case initiated by staff who believed that due consideration had not been given to staff serving on career appointments.

G. INTERNAL JUSTICE ISSUES

121. The staff representatives stated their belief that there were managers who repeatedly violated the rules and regulations. In order to determine patterns, SMCC recommended that a review of the recommendations of JAB and the decisions of UNAT over the past three years should be undertaken. The review would identify specific areas where there were problems relating to the responsibility and accountability of managers, with a view to appropriate corrective action.

122. Staff representatives also proposed that ALU should no longer defend the managers' decisions if they were appealed against, but should rather make them directly responsible for their decisions by requiring them to answer and explain how they arrived at the decisions in question. (For details see section B).

123. SMCC agreed that managers should be fully accountable for their decisions and that all efforts to achieve that goal should be fully supported. It further considered that the review and revitalization of the justice system was an integral part of the reform of the Organization. To that end, it was recommended that a joint staff/management Working Group on the Internal Justice System should be established. The following elements should be included in a prioritized list of its terms of reference:

(a) A Secretariat-wide review of the manner in which the justice system functions, taking into account data from offices away from Headquarters. In this connection, benchmark judicial cases would be forwarded to the Working Group by staff representatives system-wide;

(b) Requests for data should be carefully prepared in order to obtain a full understanding of the situation so that corrective action could be recommended by the Working Group, as appropriate;

(c) The highest priority should be assigned to the bodies under the authority of the Secretary-General, namely, the Panel of Counsel, the Panel on Discrimination and Other Grievances and the Joint Appeals Board;

(d) A review of the processes that required consideration by the intergovernmental bodies would be considered afterwards;

(e) The Working Group should be constituted as a joint staff-management body, as soon as possible, and its composition should reflect the various interests at stake. The right of each party to nominate members was recognized. However, for the sake of continuity on the staff side, it was agreed that those who had worked on the issue should be included in the Working Group, if approved by local Staff Councils. This Working Group should report to SMCC through the appropriate mechanisms.

124. Bearing in mind the need for good counsel in cases of appeal, it was recommended that Panels of Counsel at Headquarters and offices away from Headquarters should be established and/or revitalized as a priority by the local staff-management machinery at each duty station, which should ensure that all applicable rules were being followed.

125. It was further agreed that a JAC Working Group should be convened in New York immediately following SMCC-XXII to review ST/AI/371, on disciplinary measures.

H. ACHIEVEMENT OF GENDER EQUALITY

126. Management announced that ST/AI/412, on special measures for the achievement of gender equality, was being revised, taking into account numerous staff proposals on how to speed up progress in that area. In view of the importance of the new administrative instruction, management agreed that, upon receipt of the revised text, staff representatives at all duty stations would be provided ample opportunity to submit their proposals and questions to OHRM, in a time-frame longer than the usual three weeks.

127. It was further agreed that the role and the terms of reference of the departmental focal point for women would be defined in an administrative issuance.

128. UNSCV received the draft administrative instruction on special measures in February 1999, and submitted its comments in March 1999. Overall, the Vienna staff representatives concurred that, if the policies contained in the draft AI were consistently implemented, this could lead to noticeable progress in the achievement of gender balance at the Professional levels and above and to enhanced career development for staff in the General Services category.

I. HARASSMENT SURVEY

129. At SMCC-XXII, staff representatives were informed that, by June 1998, the consultant would complete the report on the results of the UN Harassment Survey, conducted in June 1997, and would submit the report to the Secretary-General for his review. Subsequently, the report would be forwarded to the (Headquarters) JAC Working Group on Harassment, to make proposals for actions to be taken. However, at the time of writing, the report has not yet reached the Secretary-General.

J. OPTIONAL RETIREMENT AT AGE 62

130. As in the year before, the Geneva Coordinating Council had again submitted a paper to SMCC proposing an amendment to Staff Regulation 9.5, with a view to eliminating the existence of two different mandatory retirement ages - 60 and 62 - depending on recruitment date, and allowing greater flexibility, while protecting the existing retirement options at age 55 and 60 for staff who had joined the Organization before 1 January 1990.

131. SMCC recommended that the paper should be submitted to the Pension Board, requesting it to examine the implications which the proposal would have for: (a) the actuarial situation of the Fund; and (b) the Regulations of the Fund.

132. The representative of CCISUA raised the question before the Pension Board, at its forty-eighth session, and the Consultant Actuary replied that the proposed change would have a modestly positive effect on the Fund's actuarial situation. The Secretary of the Board indicated that, in order to introduce such an option, no changes would be required in the Fund's Regulations and Rules, since they already accommodated staff who were given the option to stay on beyond the age of 60 as an exceptional measure. Only the Organization's Staff Rules and Regulations would need to be changed in order to permit every staff member to exercise the option automatically.

K. OUTSOURCING

133. It was agreed that local Joint Advisory Committees should review the issue of outsourcing and report to the next SMCC meeting, in 1999, and that a circular would be issued on an agreement, reached at SMCC-XXI, which had never been implemented.

134. At SMCC-XXI, which took place in June 1997, there was a lengthy discussion on outsourcing. Staff representatives presented a paper which concluded that outsourcing was more expensive in the long run because private enterprise would always be profit-oriented. There were areas where confidentiality was essential and where information should not be accessible to non-staff members. Since the United Nations did not have direct contact with employees of contractors, it was impossible to uphold certain standards, e.g., gender balance and multiculturalism. It was therefore agreed, in principle, that when outsourcing was being considered, staff representatives in the area concerned should be informed and allowed to submit their views and proposals on the matter.

135. At SMCC-XXII it was again agreed that a circular would be issued reflecting this agreement. So far, no such circular has been issued.

L. CODE OF CONDUCT

136. At the time of SMCC-XXII, the Secretary-General had submitted the revision of Chapter I of the Staff Rules and Regulations, commonly known as the Code of Conduct, to the General Assembly (document A/52/488), which in turn had solicited the views of ICSC. Staff representatives submitted to SMCC a proposal to remove all references to staff representation from the current text of the Code, arguing that such matters should be the subject of separate staff/management consultations in the context of a revision of Article VIII of the Staff Regulations and Chapter VIII of the Staff Rules. Agreement was reached on the staff's proposal, and a text of the Code amended accordingly was submitted to the General Assembly.

137. The revised Chapter I of the Staff Rules and Regulations has now been adopted by the General Assembly and has been distributed to all staff as part of ST/SGB/1998/19, "Status, Basic Rights and Duties of United Nations Staff".

M. TERM LIMIT FOR STAFF REPRESENTATIVES

138. At the 13th CCISUA Assembly, held in March 1998, staff representatives elaborated a proposal for a set of definitions, in order to arrive at SMCC-XXII at an agreed interpretation of paragraph 12, part II, of General Assembly resolution 51/226, which embodies the four-year term limit for staff representatives.

139. Accordingly, staff representatives stated at SMCC-XXII that, in their view, GA/Res/51/226 was not self-executing and required the issuance of an administrative instruction for implementation, and that the term limit should apply only from the date of issuance of such an administrative instruction; that the term "part-time" should mean 50 per cent release or more; and that the term "elected staff representatives" should not apply to members of joint bodies elected by the staff.

140. However, the Legal Adviser of SMCC stated that GA resolutions were self-executing and immediately applicable. The ASG/OHRM then provided management's interpretation of the resolution, which would be communicated to the General Assembly, as follows:

(a) Application of the term limit was limited to those staff representatives whose service on an executive committee had led to full-time or part-time release for at least four years;

(b) The term limit was to be applied prospectively, and only to those standing for election after 3 April 1997, the date of the GA resolution, and who, if elected, would again be released full-time or part-time;

(c) The term limit should not apply to staff elected to serve in other capacities, for instance as members of the Joint Appeals Board or the Joint Disciplinary Committee.

N. PROCEDURAL MATTERS

141. According to the Terms of Reference of SMCC (ST/SGB/1997/12), three days before the SMCC meeting and two days following the meeting should normally be reserved for consultations among staff representatives. For the SMCC at Bangkok, only two days of pre-SMCC and no post-SMCC consultations had been scheduled, due to financial considerations. When staff representatives protested, management clarified that the curtailment would not set a precedent. Later, management indicated that the staff side could meet for two days of post-SMCC consultations. However, other engagements of staff representatives made the extension of the meeting at such short notice impossible.

142. As consultations on many issues of the HRM reform had not been completed at Bangkok, the staff representatives requested the convening of a special session of SMCC in September 1998. That request could not be complied with, again due to financial constraints.

143. Consequently - and contrary to assurances given by the Deputy Secretary-General and the ASG/OHRM to involve staff representatives from all duty stations on a continuous basis in all issues of HRM reform - staff representatives at Vienna have over the past year received hardly any information on the progress made in the Working Groups on HRM Reform beyond what is available to staff at large, on the Intranet or through circulars.

Annex 1

STAFF REPRESENTATIVES AND ALTERNATES

<i>Attendance at meetings of UNSCV from 27 May 1998 to 20 April 1999</i>				
<i>Unit</i>	<i>Representative</i>	<i>Attendance</i>	<i>Alternate</i>	<i>Attendance</i>
ODG/RSDU	McCAFFERTY, Eileen	12	POLACCO, Stefano ⁱ	1
DACS	ARORA, Sarat	6	KHALIL, Khaled ⁱⁱ	1
DACS	ANVIEH-GOLPASHIN, Violet	6	KARUNRATNE, Anuja	5
DACS	JAYAKUMAR, Thomas	5	BABA, Ely	2
IMS/TES	DATTA, Jean	15	LONCHAMPT, Pierre	-
IMS/TES	HARMER, Helena	11	YIM, Wilfried	3
IMS/TES	KAMINKER, Roger	5	MERAL, Françoise	7
IMS/TES	HASANAT, Gerda	12	WEITHALER, Regina	2
IMS/TES	RIVALS, Janine	15	AOUN, Salem	2
UNDCP	AGUADO BOMBIN, Rosa	8	VAN DER BURGH, Chris	1
UNDCP	JEFFREY, Veronika	15	BOROVANSKY-KONIG, M.	9

UNDCP	TULLIS, Melissa	14	CAMPELLO, Giovanna	2
UNDCP	LEROY, Bernard	5	VOLZ, Catherine	4
UNDCP	OKUN, Cassandra	5	BECK, Lorraine	6
UNDCP	SANDOUK, Liliane	3	TANDADA, Maria Carmen	7
UNSSS	MANSOUR, Abdulkhaleq	11	CHARFI, Samir	-
UNSSS	KHANNA, Ashok	7	ODEN, Ann	12
UNPA	GOODCHILD, Deborah	3	RAHMAN, Rose	1
UNIS	TISOVSKY, Janos	7	WRESSNIG, Anton	1
CICP	FRIEDEL, Elisabeth ⁱⁱⁱ	7	BOULOUKOS, Adam	5
ITLB/UNSCEAR	ESTRELLA-FARIA, Jose	3	BENNETT, Burton	3
OOSA	McDOUGALL, Philip	9	RODRIGUES, Natercia	7
There was a total of 16 regular meetings from 27 May 1998 to 20 April 1999.				

Annex 2

OFFICERS OF THE STAFF COUNCIL

Staff Council	Presiding Officer	Janine Rivals
Staff Committee	President	Gerda Hasanat
Vice-President	Jean Datta	
	Secretary	Veronika Jeffrey
	Treasurer	Rosa Aguado Bombin
	Rapporteur	Melissa Tullis
Unit Presidents	DACS	-
	IMS/TES	Sally Reading
	UNDCP	Françoise Maung
	CICP	Burkhard Dammann
	OLA/ITLB	Jernej Sekolec
	UNPA	Harald Schober
	UNSSS	Abdulkhaled Marouf
	ODG	-
	OOSA	-
	UNIS	-
Polling Officers	Chairperson	Inge Fontane-Dalwi José Luis García Gonzáles Jill Tobin
Auditing Committee		Elwood Graham Mathew Kurinjimala Udo Raich

Annex 3

STAFF NOMINEES ON STATUTORY JOINT BODIES, COMMITTEES AND WORKING GROUPS

Joint Advisory Committee	Members	Jose Angelo Estrella Faria Joanne Greig Gerda Hasanat
	Alternates	Adam Bouloukos Jean Datta Veronika Jeffrey
Joint JAC Standing Committee on Medical and Life Insurance	Member	Smart Eze
	Alternate	Dimitrios Vlassis
General Service Classification Appeals and Review Committee	Chairperson	Carol Unterleitner
	Members	Pieter Delcour Eileen McCafferty Maureen McGregor Thaer Saman
Staff Welfare Board	Chairperson	Pierre Lonchamp
	Members	Sarat Arora Waltraud Jochum Beng Teoh Olaf-Michael Stefanov
Staff Assistance Committee	Chairperson	Rosemarie Bulant
	Members	Sarat Arora Veronika Jeffrey Lilian Sandouk
Joint Appeals Board ^a	Chairpersons	Pierre Lonchamp Beatrice Romero Catherine Volz
	Members	Jean-François Thony Dimitrios Vlassis

^a The membership of JAB has been increased, but not yet officially announced.

Joint Disciplinary Committee	Presiding Officer	Bernard Leroy
	Chairperson	Burton Bennett
	Members	Akira Fujino

		Gillian Murray Slawomir Redo
Panel on Discrimination and other Grievances	Coordinator Members	Jean Datta Adam Bouloukos Smart Eze Hubert George Giesela Wieser-Herbeck Gabriele Wagner
Panel of Counsel in Disciplinary and Appeal Cases	Coordinator Counsels	Martha Souza Samuel C.H. Chao Maria-Luisa Chavez Joanne Greig Ralph Krech Susan Mlango Mathieu Mounikou Pavel Pachta Winston Sims Andrew Wells
Appointment and Promotion Board of UNDCP	Members Alternates	Sumru Noyan Herbert Schaepe Gale Day vacant ^b
Appointment and Promotion Committee	Members Alternates	Mohamed Abdul-Aziz Beatrice Romero S. Camacho Akira Fujino Sally Reading Valeri Tchernikov
Appointment and Promotion Panel	Members Alternates	Estela Deon Elisabeth Friedel Patrick Seramy Mitchell Hsieh Elisabeth Scheugl Gisela Wieser-Herbeck

^b The staff Council has submitted two candidates on 2 December 1998; management has not yet informed about its decision.

Placement and Promotion Advisory Panel for P staff (UNOV)	Member	Maria-Elena Blanco
	Alternate	Adnan Ramadan
Placement and Promotion Advisory Panel for P staff (UNDCP)	Member	Himmat Kahlon
	Alternate	Cindy Fazey
Joint UNOV/ODCCP Departmental Advisory Panel For GS Staff	Members	Lars Larson Susan Mlango
	Alternates	Paul Patak Imad Zaher
Joint Monitoring Committee	Members	Christopher Bayne Romain Kieffer
PAS Rebuttal Panel (UNOV)^c	Chairpersons	Jose M. Gonzalez Garcia Petr Lala
	Members	Raghupathy Sankaran Nicole Galeazzi Brigitte Kubelka Christian Wendlinger
Joint Advisory Committee on the VIC Child Care Centre	Member	Silvia Levissianos
Commissary Advisory Committee	Members	Janine Rivals Dimitrios Vlassis
	Alternates	Sarat Arora Patrick Seramy
Catering Advisory Committee	Members	Sarat Arora Janine Rivals
	Alternates	Françoise Meral Olaf Stefanov
Joint Advisory Group on Garage Operations	Member	Nada Blanusa-Subotic
	Alternate	Gabriele Wagner

^c PAS Rebuttal Panels for UNDCP and ODCCP have yet to be established.

Annex 4

ISSUANCES OF FOCUS

<i>Focus number</i>	<i>Date issued</i>	<i>Subject</i>
UNSCV/XVI /F14	19 May 1998	Staff Services Questionnaire
UNSCV/XVI /F15	21 May 1998	Staff Services Office discontinued pending evaluation
UNSCV/XVI I/F1	27 May 1998	Medical expenses - Cost awareness and cost containment
UNSCV/XVI I/F2	08 June 1998	Election of Staff Committee
UNSCV/XVII /F3	25 September 1998	Stopgap Housing Service arranged by the Staff Council
UNSCV/XVII /F4	16 October 1998	Staff member assessment of flexible working hours
UNSCV/XVII/F5	24 November 1998	Last chance to make your views on flexible working hours
UNSCV/XVII /F6	18 January 1999	Housing Service for UNOV staff arranged by the Staff Council to be continued indefinitely

i Resigned on 10 December 1998.

ii Resigned on 22 July 1998.

iii Resigned on 9 September 1998.