

Reorganisation of Secretariat 1960-1961: Reorganisation of Secretariat 1960...

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Reorganization of Secretariat

1953-54

Background papers:

- U.N. Gen.-Assembly, 8-th session, Doc. A/2554
Report of the Sec.-Gen.
- Extract from the Report of D.H. of 21 sept. 54
- Extract from Statement by D.H. to the 5-th
Committee on 11 Oct. 54



Agenda item 48: Organization of the Secretariat

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DOCUMENT A/2554

Report of the Secretary-General

*[Original text : English]
[12 November 1953]*

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The question of the organization of the Secretariat has been a matter of debate in the Fifth Committee at the sixth and seventh sessions of the General Assembly and has been repeatedly discussed by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions at its sessions over the same period. At its sixth session, the General Assembly, in the course of a discussion on the organization of and relationships among the Departments of Economic Affairs and Social Affairs and the Technical Assistance Administration, broadened the scope of the review to be made of the Secretariat's organizational pattern and requested the Secretary-General to study the whole structure and functions of the three units concerned, as well as the system of co-ordination between them, within the context of a wider reorganization of the Secretariat.

2. Pursuant to the above request, the first Secretary-General presented to the General Assembly at its seventh session a memorandum on the organization of the Secretariat¹ in which he reviewed its operation, indicated areas in which economies might be made, suggested a regrouping of activities and proposed a new scheme for the central organization of the Secretariat. The Secretary-General proposed that the present departmental structure should, in general, be maintained and the departments grouped under three deputy secretaries-general. Thus, under that arrangement, there would have been a Deputy

for Political and Public Affairs, another for Economic and Social Affairs and a third for Administrative and Conference Services. The report was not dealt with definitively at the seventh session, and the Secretary-General, by General Assembly resolution 681 A (VII) of 21 December 1952, was asked to present a report on the question of reorganization of the Secretariat at the eighth session. In the meantime Mr. Trygve Lie resigned and I took office on 10 April 1953. In my statement to the Fifth Committee on 30 September 1953 (379th meeting), based on my experience during the first months of my incumbency, I expressed my belief that a measure of streamlining could be undertaken, provided a greater degree of elasticity in the use of staff, which alone would make it possible to carry the burden more economically, could be successfully developed. At that time I was not yet ready to make any specific recommendations.

3. The Preparatory Commission, in making its report on the organization of the Secretariat, subsequently accepted by the General Assembly in 1946, was guided in part by the special organizational requirements flowing from implementation of the United Nations Charter, in part by the experience of the League of Nations, and in part by the administrative concepts and practices of various Member States. The Secretariat so organized has now been in operation for nearly eight years. In many respects it has functioned smoothly and effectively. But sufficient time has now passed and adequate experience has been accumulated to permit a re-examination of some of the premises upon which the Secretariat is organized and a revaluation of its structure in the light of the special character of its operation.

¹ See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Seventh Session, Annexes*, agenda item 69, document A/2214, part I.

4. Article 7 of the Charter establishes the Secretariat as one of the principal organs of the United Nations. The Charter, in Chapter XV, outlines the status and main political responsibilities of the Secretariat and of the Secretary-General as chief administrative officer of the Organization. In the wider context of the bodies which together form the United Nations family the Secretariat has its special place and responsibilities. A good and efficient Secretariat, serving as it does on a year-round basis, has an important part to play in advising and assisting the inter-governmental organs of the United Nations in carrying out their decisions, and in maintaining continuous relations with the governments of Member States and with the public.

5. The general scope of the activities of the Secretariat is determined by the obligations resulting from the concerted efforts of governments of Member States to resolve important short-term and long-term problems of mutual concern with the aid of the agencies at their disposal within the United Nations family. The work of the Secretariat must be carried on in the most efficient and economical way, but it would be against the interest of Members and against the very spirit of the Charter if economies were permitted to become ends in themselves. Economies should result from the greatest possible efficiency and a continuing self-criticism as to the way in which various tasks are carried out. It is incumbent on the governments of Member States carefully to consider what balance to strike between tasks to be entrusted to the Secretariat and the desire to keep costs down. In this respect the Secretary-General also has responsibilities. It is his duty to draw attention to tasks that may have become obsolete, with ensuing possibilities for a reduction of the work-load, and to possible objections, on administrative or other grounds, to the adoption of new proposals. He has equally the responsibility to draw the attention of Members in the General Assembly and other organs to such essential needs for new action as he sees developing.

6. Thus, an examination of the organization of the Secretariat must be made with full recognition of its basic responsibilities as one of the principal organs for the carrying out of United Nations objectives. It is also necessary to recognize the dynamic character of that task, calling as it does both for efforts in new directions and for a revision of previous decisions the original importance of which has been reduced by later developments.

7. The views expressed and the conclusions reached in the present report accordingly approach the problem of economy not from the financial but from the substantive angle. I am convinced that this approach, which recognizes equally the need for the greatest possible efficiency and the necessity of meeting to the full the requirements of a developing United Nations policy, is the soundest approach also to the problem of budget savings.

8. The special responsibilities of the Secretariat and its place within the United Nations family raise administrative problems for which there is no parallel in a national administration. It is the responsibility of the Secretary-General in his recruitment policy to provide for an equitable and wide geographical distribution within the Secretariat. In carrying out this responsibility, the Secretary-General is inevitably confronted with difficult organizational problems and with the necessity of properly balancing various experiences and approaches. It is also obvious that wide geographical distribution creates many staffing problems not present in national civil service systems. These factors must be taken into account when considering the problem of efficiency and sound administration in the United Nations Secretariat. Basic adminis-

trative considerations must shape the policy of the Secretary-General who, under the Charter, is responsible for appointments even of the highest posts in the Secretariat. He must, moreover, in the very interest of sound administration, try to achieve the greatest possible degree of continuity. In making his appointments he is under an obligation to provide for wide geographical distribution, but in doing so he must remember that, while the Secretariat is the instrument of a political organization, the Charter does not intend that political considerations appropriate to other organs of the United Nations should jeopardize the independence and truly international character of the Secretariat or open the door to undue influence on the Secretary-General's personnel policy.

II. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

9. Taking as a basis the report of the first Secretary-General, I started in the early days of my incumbency a study of the organizational arrangements that might be made in order to increase efficiency and achieve economies and to ensure a well-balanced distribution of responsibilities in the interest of sound administration. I soon found it necessary to extend this review of the administration, and for that reason I initiated in July certain detailed studies within each department. In the course of the following months, I have also observed closely the working of the Secretariat, both before and during the General Assembly sessions, thus broadening the personal basis for my review, which is being pursued with the help of a special working group under my chairmanship.

10. The main conclusions at which I have arrived—confirming experiences which I have gathered in other administrations—are, first, that a streamlining of the Secretariat leading to substantial economies is not possible without a review of its substantive tasks, and, secondly, that no such economies are possible without the development of a wider degree of flexibility in the use of staff, both within and among the various organizational units.

11. In both cases the changes envisaged require time. In the first case, a careful examination must be made of the circumstances under which the various tasks have become responsibilities of the United Nations and of the Secretariat, to what extent the need for special programmes may have changed and how new approaches to various operations might best be undertaken. In certain situations no effective action will be possible without submitting the question to the General Assembly or the other organs responsible for the original decisions. With respect to flexibility, it is obvious that an improvement in administrative techniques must be the result of continuing efforts over a period of time and cannot be achieved simply by decree.

12. In the present report I wish to submit to the General Assembly, in the hope that it will give me its views and guidance, the main lines of the policy concerning the structure of the Secretariat which I propose to follow, as well as a few of the practical objectives to be attained.

III. GENERAL STRUCTURE OF THE SECRETARIAT

13. The former Secretary-General, in his memorandum to the General Assembly (A/2214), stated that the organizational plans developed by the Preparatory Commission "were well conceived for the initial period of the Organization's life". The establishment of the Secretariat in eight departments and the Executive Office of the Secretary-General corresponded with the requirements for servicing organs for generally meeting the needs of the United Nations in other respects.

14. Experience has demonstrated that in one or two areas some adjustments in the organizational pattern could now very well be made.

15. Leaving aside at this stage the question of the central organization of the Secretariat at its top levels, I consider that the following modifications in structure would contribute to the effectiveness of the Secretariat by clarifying the lines of authority and facilitating the formulation of over-all policy, as well as the planning and co-ordination of programmes and the use of staff.

16. The Secretary-General has at present, directly assisting him, an Executive Office. I consider that three further offices should be given the same position, i.e. offices under the immediate and personal direction of the Secretary-General. The three offices concerned would be a Personnel Office to replace the present Bureau of Personnel, a Finance Office to replace the present Bureau of Finance, and a Legal Office to replace the present Legal Department. The present Department of Administrative and Financial Services as such would disappear.

17. With the suggested arrangement, the Executive Office of the Secretary-General would continue its functions of assisting the Secretary-General in the duties described in the Administrative Manual, Volume I, Chapter II. The control of the Secretary-General over personnel and financial matters would become more direct, and the position of the officials responsible for these matters, who would act directly on the Secretary-General's behalf, would be clarified in relation to the substantive and service departments. Similarly, the change from Legal Department to Legal Office would reflect more clearly its role in providing legal advice to the Secretary-General and in acting on his behalf in legal matters. The concentration of administrative responsibility at the centre should lead to a simplification of procedures and have a good effect in the day-to-day administration. In this way the suggested arrangement should result in economies.

18. Concerning the other departments I suggest the following arrangements. The Departments of Economic Affairs and Social Affairs, which already serve under one Assistant Secretary-General, should be co-ordinated as one department to the full extent that follows from this arrangement. The Department of Conferences and General Services should be divided into two units, a Department of Conference Services and an Office of General Services. The Department of Political and Security Council Affairs, the Department of Trusteeship and Information from Non-Self-Governing Territories and the Department of Public Information should be maintained on the present basis as separate departments. Finally, the Technical Assistance Administration, which has a special position in the Organization, should be maintained as an independent unit. Its close co-ordination with the new Department of Economic and Social Affairs should be supervised directly by the Secretary-General.

19. The many necessary points of contact in the work programmes of the present Departments of Economic Affairs and Social Affairs justify a co-ordination for reasons of administrative efficiency and the most effective servicing of the Economic and Social Council. It is difficult to say at this stage to what extent the changes would lead to economies, but in this case also a foundation would be laid for a rational development making possible reasonable economies by a fuller integration of work. Similar reasons might be advanced for an amalgamation of the Technical Assistance Administration with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. If I do not suggest such a change, it is because I consider that the possible gain from the point of view of co-ordination and efficiency would be more than outweighed

by the disadvantage of not having an independent unit in charge of this special activity with its widespread operations in Member and non-member countries, and its working relations with other technical assistance programmes, whether inside or outside the family of the United Nations. The present Department of Conference and General Services is of a magnitude leading to certain administrative difficulties. Now that the Secretariat has settled down in its permanent Headquarters and the pattern of services and the use of space are well established, the desirability of maintaining Conference Services and General Services in a single department has disappeared.

20. The plans set out above would call for certain adjustments of responsibilities among various departments and in administrative controls; they would also call for the transfer of certain units such as the Library and the Field Service. I do not consider it necessary to go into detail concerning these or other changes, as such matters can best be settled in the light of the Assembly's views on the main proposals which I make here.

IV. CHANGES IN THE CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION OF THE SECRETARIAT

21. I come now to the question of the central organization of the Secretariat at its top levels. The present arrangement consists of two top echelons under the Secretary-General, i.e. one echelon of Assistant Secretaries-General and one of Principal Directors. The original intention was to create in the Assistant Secretaries-General a group of officials broadly representative of the Member nations, on the highest responsible level, who, in addition to being heads of departments, would serve the Secretary-General in a representative capacity with individual Member countries and groups of countries. Under them the Principal Directors were intended to function as the administrative officials charged with the conduct of operations of the various departments. Experience has shown, however, that the creation of permanent national delegations at the Headquarters of the United Nations has given opportunities for a continuous and close contact between the Secretary-General personally and the various governments; the work of the Assistant Secretaries-General has thus been largely related to the direction of the various departments. I have found the arrangement, as it has developed, difficult to justify.

22. In view of the considerations set out above, I believe that the reconstituted departments should be headed by one echelon of officials instead of two. The responsibilities of the officials occupying the new posts would be essentially administrative, as in the case of the Principal Directors. Such political responsibilities as they may be required to exercise in particular areas or on particular issues would, in keeping with the principles of the Charter, be theirs by delegation from the Secretary-General. Their political responsibilities thus would clearly be exercised on the personal responsibility of the Secretary-General. The new officials may, in the light of their functions as here defined, properly be named Under-Secretaries.

23. The basic salaries of the Under-Secretaries should be the same as those of the present Principal Directors. However, it may prove necessary to adjust the emoluments of the Under-Secretaries by special allowances. These allowances have to be considered in the light of the responsibilities and status of the Under-Secretaries in relation to those of the executive heads and senior officers of the specialized agencies in the United Nations family. Account may also have to be taken of the special responsibilities of the heads of some of the departments of the

Secretariat. Finally, it may be found advisable to leave to the Secretary-General possibilities of taking into account also the special qualifications of candidates.

24. In the light of experience it may be found necessary, in exceptional cases, for example in the new Department of Economic and Social Affairs, to give Under-Secretaries the assistance of Deputy Under-Secretaries. It may also, in the further elaboration of the Organization, be found that there is a need for one or two Under-Secretaries without portfolio, serving as advisers to the Secretary-General on special questions.

25. In view of the last considerations it is difficult to say now what reduction of the top staff would result from the proposals made. Some reduction there will be, but the main economies achieved, in this as in other cases, would follow rather from the improvement of the administrative arrangements than from a reduction in the number of posts.

26. As I have already mentioned, my predecessor, in his report on the organization of the Secretariat to the seventh session of the General Assembly, proposed the creation of three posts of deputy secretaries-general to replace the present posts of Assistant Secretaries-General. Each one of the three deputy secretaries-general would have been placed, under the Secretary-General, in charge of a group of departments. After reflection, I have not found sufficient reason for such an arrangement, which, by introducing a new level between the Secretary-General and the departments, might encumber procedures without adding compensating substantive advantages from either the political or the administrative point of view. I would, however, like to reserve my opinion on one point. If experience were to show that the proposed arrangement became too heavy and time-consuming for the Secretary-General, it might be desirable to create one post of Deputy Secretary-General. I make this observation only by way of a general reserve and not as a proposal to the Assembly.

V. CONCLUSIONS

27. On the basis of the policies and arrangements set forth above, and with the full co-operation of the organs of the United Nations as suggested earlier in the present report, I hope to be able to achieve a reduction in the over-all budget of the United Nations of one million

dollars over the coming fiscal year. The incidence of this saving can only be determined as the review of the Secretariat operations proceeds and in the light of the decisions of other organs of the United Nations as they affect the work-load.

28. The abolition of posts involved in the process of reorganization and review need not affect the existing staff to any important extent. Most of the abolitions can be absorbed by the normal turnover of staff.

29. I referred earlier to the special responsibilities of the Secretariat as one of the principal organs of the United Nations, to its place in the United Nations family, and to special administrative problems arising because of its international nature. I also stressed that the United Nations operations are of a dynamic nature, calling both for a cancelling of activities which have become obsolete and for expansion into new fields. An important aspect of the problem of flexibility is the capacity of the Secretariat to adjust quickly and adequately to the changing needs which the United Nations has to serve.

30. The proposals set out in the present report aim at creating the basis for a sound administration with the best possible co-ordination of the various Secretariat activities; thus, the approach is wholly from the angle of substance and efficiency. I have indicated that these proposals, together with a review, with the full co-operation of the organs concerned, of the tasks undertaken by the United Nations and the development, step by step, of increased flexibility in administrative procedures and the use of staff, are likely to lead to considerable economies. This is important, but the economies aimed at and anticipated are the expression not of a policy of contraction but of a policy aimed at fulfilling, at the lowest possible cost, the tasks of the Secretariat, as they arise out of the general development of the United Nations.

31. I have not raised in my report any of the important organizational problems relating to the co-ordination of the activities of the Secretariat at Headquarters with those of, for example, the regional commissions and the High Commissioner for Refugees. The solution to be reached on these questions will be influenced by the attitude taken on the issues discussed here. These questions, and other related problems, thus will be subject to further study, the results of which will be put before the General Assembly at its next regular session.

DOCUMENT A/2606

Thirty-sixth report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

[Original text: English]
[5 December 1953]

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered a report submitted by the Secretary-General on the question of the organization of the Secretariat (A/2554). Paragraphs 1 and 2 of that document set out the circumstances in which the report has been prepared, while other paragraphs show that the Secretary-General has not attempted, in the time available, the full report on the reorganization of the Secretariat requested in General Assembly resolution 681 A (VII) of 21 December 1952.

2. The Advisory Committee therefore construes the Secretary-General's report as outlining the broad framework of his proposals for future action, the further details of which will in due course be filled in. The report is also tentative in character, in the sense that neither the General Assembly nor the Secretary-General would, as

the Advisory Committee sees the position, feel bound in detail by all the formulae or suggestions which the report contains.

3. The fact must nevertheless be noted that certain far-reaching changes may be introduced during 1954 in the administrative structure of the Secretariat, and, since these cannot prudently be undertaken on a tentative basis, they must be studied with as much care as possible in the time remaining to the Assembly at its current session. The report adumbrates a programme of administrative action and the methods that are suggested for its fulfilment. In the penultimate paragraph, the Secretary-General defines his approach to the problem as being "wholly from the angle of substance and efficiency". His outline programme, if combined with a review of the tasks performed by the United Nations and with an

increased flexibility in administrative procedures and the use of staff, is likely, in his opinion, to lead to considerable economies. But such economies are important as expressing not a policy of contraction but rather a policy aimed at fulfilling, at the lowest possible cost, tasks arising out of the development of the Organization.

4. With the broad outlines of the suggested programme the Advisory Committee is in general agreement and, since the detailed procedure for giving effect to that programme falls largely within the Secretary-General's province, its observations are limited to points which the Secretary-General himself raises.

5. A specific suggestion is put forward, as regards the administrative organization of the Secretariat, to vary the structure laid down by the General Assembly in resolution 13 (I) of 13 February 1946. It is therefore important to note that, after a general preamble stipulating that the "organization of the Secretariat should be so designed as to enable the work of the Secretariat to be conducted with the greatest possible efficiency", and an indication in paragraph 2 of the eight departments which the Secretariat should comprise, the resolution goes on to authorize the Secretary-General to appoint Assistant Secretaries-General without specifying their number, and, finally, in paragraph 4, to request him to "make such changes in the initial structure as may be required to the end that the most effective distribution of responsibilities and functions among the units of the Secretariat may be achieved". Therefore, it follows that the General Assembly did not desire to impose a rigid or perpetual adherence to the structure projected in 1945 and 1946. Furthermore, during the intervening years the plan elaborated by the Preparatory Commission and adopted by the General Assembly at its first session has undergone in fact, though not in principle, extensive changes. Thus, two posts of Assistant Secretary-General, though still figuring in the annual budget of the Organization, have been in abeyance for some time and the Departments of Economic Affairs and Social Affairs have been brought under a single administrative head. In addition, a new unit, the Technical Assistance Administration, was established in 1950 and placed in the charge of a Director-General with a salary equivalent to that of an Assistant Secretary-General.

6. Cogent arguments appear in paragraphs 21 and 22 of the report in favour of the substitution for the two highest levels under the Secretary-General of a single supervisory level, and the Advisory Committee concurs in this proposal. Furthermore, the Secretary-General states that the responsibilities of officials occupying posts at that level would be essentially administrative, and he proposes that they should be named Under-Secretaries. While agreeing that a change of title might be desirable, the Committee suggests that the precise wording should be left to the General Assembly.

7. It is evident that the structure of the Secretariat at the highest levels, together with problems connected with the geographical distribution of the staff, may raise important issues of a political nature. The Committee does not doubt that these problems will receive the most careful consideration. Its present comments on the Secretary-General's proposals have been made solely from their administrative angle and without reference to other questions, including those of a political nature, to which those proposals may give rise.

8. As regards the remuneration proposed for officials at the supervisory level, the Advisory Committee would be in favour of achieving necessary variations through a gradation of the salary rates according to the responsibilities of each individual post.

9. The suggested modifications in structure, while generally acceptable, disclose certain points of ambiguity or possible weakness. There is good ground for the conversion of the Legal Department into a Legal Office under the immediate, personal direction of the Secretary-General. On the other hand, a similar action in respect of Administrative and Financial Services, unless regarded as a temporary measure for the next two years, seems open to certain doubts because of the risk that the authority of those functions may be reduced. To these the Secretary-General refers by implication when touching upon the possibility that the proposed general arrangements may prove too heavy and time-consuming for the Secretary-General. The Advisory Committee, though reluctant in a study of outline proposals to enter into points of detail, suggests that the status of the heads of Offices in relation to that of officials at the highest administrative level merits close attention. The Secretary-General expresses the view that his control over personnel and financial matters would become more direct (A/2554, paragraph 17). The authority of those functions would thereby be increased. The Advisory Committee considers, in this connexion, that the grading of the heads of the Finance and Personnel Offices should be such that, without derogating from the over-all control and responsibility of the Secretary-General, he should not be required to shoulder an unduly heavy burden in respect of those Offices.

10. The Secretary-General's report indicates that "with the suggested arrangement [the addition of three offices] the Executive Office of the Secretary-General would continue its functions of assisting the Secretary-General in the duties described in the Administrative Manual, Volume I, chapter II" (A/2554, paragraph 17). It would be the expectation of the Advisory Committee that certain of the functions in question would be reviewed, as part of the general reorganization, with a view to their possible transference to a more suitable location within the substantive departments.

11. Similarly, the Advisory Committee has doubts about the continued separation of the Technical Assistance Administration from the unified Department of Economic and Social Affairs, in that the Administration seems to form a natural and integral part of its substantive counterpart in economic and social affairs. Due note must, however, be taken of the Secretary-General's opinion that the possible gain to be derived from such a fusion would be far outweighed by the disadvantage of not having an independent unit for technical assistance. The Committee accordingly limits itself to a tentative suggestion that, in this matter also, the maintenance of a separate unit for the performance of functions that are almost exclusively substantive might be regarded as a provisional measure, to be reviewed within two years' time.

12. In conclusion, the Advisory Committee wishes to emphasize its view that the Secretary-General's proposals are in general well conceived. The foregoing observations are therefore offered not in criticism of those proposals, but as suggestions that may be found worthy of study during the working out of detailed proposals for submission to the General Assembly. Indeed, it is the opinion of the Advisory Committee that, within the limits set by the Secretary-General himself in his report, the fullest scope should be afforded for the improvements in the organization of the Secretariat which the Secretary-General's proposals are intended to accomplish, and for the achievement of the financial savings contemplated for 1954 in his report.

DOCUMENT A/2625

Report of the Fifth Committee

[Original text : English]
[9 December 1953]

1. By resolution 681 A (VII) of 21 December 1952, the General Assembly, at its seventh session, decided to include the question of the organization of the Secretariat in the provisional agenda of its eighth session. Pursuant to that resolution, the Secretary-General issued a report (A/2554) indicating the main lines of his approach to the problem of streamlining the Secretariat and outlining the broad framework of his proposals for future action. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions offered its comments on the Secretary-General's proposals in its thirty-sixth report to the eighth session of the General Assembly (A/2606). It was on the basis of these two reports that the Fifth Committee, at its 427th, 428th and 429th meetings, held on 8 and 9 December 1953, reviewed the question of the reorganization of the Secretariat, which the General Assembly, at its 435th plenary meeting on 17 September 1953, had referred to the Fifth Committee for consideration.

2. In its report, the Advisory Committee stated its general agreement with the broad outlines of the Secretary-General's suggested programme, while recognizing, however, the tentative character of that programme. It considered, nevertheless, that certain substantial changes might be introduced during 1954 in the administrative structure of the Secretariat and that, in consequence, it would be prudent for the General Assembly to study the proposals with as much care as possible in the time remaining at the current session. It was with this point in mind that the Advisory Committee had limited the observations in its report to those specific questions which the Secretary-General, recognizing their significance, had himself raised, and upon which he was looking to the General Assembly for its views and guidance.

3. The Secretary-General, in introducing his report at the Committee's 427th meeting, expressed his great satisfaction at the essential agreement between the Advisory Committee and himself on the proposals as a whole. Since the Advisory Committee had expressed some reservation on certain points or had urged a cautionary approach regarding them, the Secretary-General, in amplification of his report, addressed himself primarily to these particular matters. While concurring in the suggestion for the abolition of the existing two top levels in the Secretariat and the introduction of a new unified top level, the Advisory Committee had drawn attention to the issues of a political nature to which such action would give rise because of the impact it might have on the question of national representation. The Secretary-General stated that, in making his proposals, he had been faced with two possibilities—either he could start out from the political angle, consulting the governments most directly concerned, and frame his proposals upon that basis; or he could outline what seemed to him to be the most rational administrative arrangement, submit it to the General Assembly for preliminary consideration, and undertake consultations with governments on the basis thus established. He did not believe that the former course would have been a wise procedure, since it would have been difficult under such an arrangement to have presented to the General Assembly a plan which set out in clear terms what was in his opinion the best possible administrative arrangement. Having chosen the latter line, the Secretary-General stated that his next step would necessarily be to undertake such consultations as might be necessary in order to see how the main political

considerations could be taken into account and to what extent his optimum plan would have to be adjusted in order to meet those considerations. If he then found it impossible to establish what he considered to be a proper balance on the top level in respect of national representation, he would have to present to the General Assembly at its ninth session definite plans for the organization of the Secretariat which might depart from his present proposals. In this case he would inform the Assembly of the reasons for such deviations. The Secretary-General emphasized, however, that under the Charter it was for him to decide on the recruitment of persons filling top level posts in the Secretariat, as well as on the distribution of responsibilities between officials on that level. The Secretary-General underlined the fact that at the present juncture he was requesting of the General Assembly preliminary consideration and advice. The final decisions of the General Assembly would have to be taken on the basis of his proposals in the budget estimates for 1955. But if the Fifth Committee and the General Assembly were to endorse the general attitude of the Advisory Committee, he would go ahead with the organization plans on the basis of his report to the extent that this could be done without in any way encroaching on the rights of the Fifth Committee or of the General Assembly to decide finally on such matters.

4. The Secretary-General agreed with the Advisory Committee that his assumption of direct responsibility for the present functions of the Assistant Secretary-General in charge of Administrative and Financial Services in relation to personnel and financial questions should only be taken on a tentative basis in view of the heavy workload which would devolve on the Secretary-General. For that reason he proposed that the arrangements should be reconsidered at a later date, perhaps after two years' experience. He felt, nevertheless, that at the present juncture no more effective way existed of ensuring to those officials directly concerned with financial and personnel matters the authority which they should clearly have, than to let them speak directly on behalf of the Secretary-General in their relations with the substantive departments. It was important, moreover, that the Secretary-General himself should assume in these important questions the greatest possible measure of personal responsibility.

5. Discussion of the Secretary-General's proposals revealed a wide measure of support. Although various delegations entertained certain doubts and expressed reservations or objections on specific points, it was the consensus of opinion that the proposals were in general well conceived and represented a constructive and promising step towards securing those improvements in the organization and structure of the Secretariat which many members had for long felt to be highly desirable.

6. Representatives who participated in the discussion unanimously expressed their confidence in the capacity of the Secretary-General to carry through his reforms in a manner which would meet with the approval of the governments of Member States and which, if combined with a review of the tasks performed by the United Nations and with an increased flexibility in administrative procedures and in the use of staff, would lead to substantial economies. Accordingly, it was urged that the Secretary-General should be given full authority to

proceed along the lines he had tentatively suggested without necessarily waiting for the General Assembly at its ninth session to pass in detail upon arrangements which, in any event, fell largely within his administrative jurisdiction. It was suggested that the detailed implementation of the broad plans which the Secretary-General had outlined in his report could best be left to the Secretary-General himself in consultation from time to time with the Advisory Committee.

7. Most delegations welcomed the proposal for merging the two highest levels immediately below the Secretary-General into a single supervisory level, having regard to the considerations set forth in the Secretary-General's report, and further elaborated by him in his statements before the Fifth Committee. Some representatives however, while in general agreement with the other main features of the proposed reorganization, voiced their objection to the abolition of the post of Assistant Secretary-General. Such a change, it was contended, would be in violation of the "gentleman's agreement" made in 1946 for the distribution of top level posts among nationals of Member States; moreover, it would not be in conformity with the decisions taken by the General Assembly itself as embodied in resolutions adopted at the first session relating to the structure and staffing of the Secretariat. The Secretariat had functioned smoothly for the past eight years on the basis of the London decisions; it would therefore be a grave mistake to change so radically the functions and roles of the Assistant Secretaries-General by replacing them with Under-Secretaries whose responsibilities would be of an essentially administrative character.

8. With reference to this feature of his proposals, the Secretary-General explained that the functions of the proposed Under-Secretaries would correspond very closely to those being performed by the Assistant Secretaries-General at the present time. These functions, however, did not in all respects correspond with those which were envisaged at the time the Organization was created. In point of fact, the Assistant Secretaries-General were mainly administrative officials whose responsibilities were largely confined to the supervision of their respective Departments; due partly to the establishment of permanent delegations and partly to other reasons, they had not functioned in the wider diplomatic sense which had been contemplated earlier.

9. Several delegations, while accepting in principle the Secretary-General's tentative proposals with respect to the central administration of the Secretariat, were doubtful as to the wisdom of the suggested change in title from Assistant Secretary-General to Under-Secretary. Some were inclined to favour the retention of the existing titles, since any change might imply a diminution in the importance and responsibilities of the top posts. In any event, the need was stressed, due regard being paid to political and geographical considerations, of securing the best men available.

10. While a number of delegations voiced certain misgivings with respect to the creation of an Office of Finance and an Office of Personnel in place of the present Department of Administrative and Financial Services, others felt that the more direct responsibility to be assumed by the Secretary-General himself for financial and personnel matters should not result in any lessening of the authority pertaining to those functions. Most representatives expressed satisfaction with the assurances given by the Secretary-General in this respect.

11. Concern was expressed lest the proposed arrangements, particularly the additional responsibilities which would devolve upon the Secretary-General, might prove

too heavy and time-consuming by adding unduly to the Secretary-General's administrative burdens at the expense of his political responsibilities. In this connexion, it was suggested that serious difficulties might arise should the Secretary-General himself have to be absent from Headquarters for extensive periods. It was, therefore, felt by some delegations that there was much to be said for an arrangement under which the Secretary-General would have final authority for, but would not be directly involved in, day-to-day decisions on strictly administrative matters. For these reasons, among others, some delegations expressed their readiness to give sympathetic consideration to any request which the Secretary-General might later feel obliged to make for the appointment of a deputy. The merger of the Departments of Economic Affairs and Social Affairs was generally welcomed, although doubt was expressed as to whether a fully consolidated department might not be beyond the optimum size for maximum efficiency. On the other hand, several representatives indicated their regret that the proposed merger did not also include the Technical Assistance Administration (TAA), since the maintenance of that department as a separate unit would inevitably make for a good deal of duplication. The hope was, therefore, expressed that the Secretary-General would find it possible to bring about the closest possible association between the Department of Economic and Social Affairs on the one hand, and TAA on the other.

12. The question was raised by one delegation whether the Department of Public Information should be placed on the same level as substantive departments, in view of the fact that it was primarily a service department. This was a consideration which, it was felt, should influence the place and status which public information services should occupy within the framework of a reorganized Secretariat.

13. In commenting on the proposed structure of the Secretariat at the highest levels, many representatives stressed the necessity of paying particular attention to the problem of ensuring wide geographical distribution of the staff. The requirement of Article 101 of the Charter, if it was to be properly and adequately applied, called for a balanced geographical distribution of posts in the higher policy-making levels, no less than throughout the Secretariat as a whole. The hope was expressed, in this connexion, that the Secretary-General would bear in mind the interests of the smaller Member States no less than those of the larger Powers. At the same time, the importance was emphasized of taking advantage of any general reorganization to improve the quality, as well as the geographical distribution, of the staff. In so far as any conflict might arise between considerations of geography on the one hand, and considerations of quality on the other, it was the view of some delegations that the latter should always prevail.

14. Certain delegations indicated their unreserved endorsement of the considerations set forth by the Secretary-General in paragraphs 5 and 23 of his report (A/2554). Many representatives also expressed substantial agreement with the observations of the Advisory Committee as set forth particularly in paragraphs 6 to 11 of its thirty-sixth report (A/2606).

15. Virtually all delegations associated themselves both with the view expressed by the Secretary-General that the basic approach to the problem of the reorganization of the Secretariat should be wholly from the angle of substance and efficiency, and with his main conclusions—first, that a streamlining of the Secretariat leading to substantial economies was not possible without a review of its substantive tasks, and secondly, that no such economies

were possible without the development of a wider degree of flexibility of staff, both within and among the various organizational units. It was generally agreed that the economies aimed at and anticipated should be the expression not of a policy of contraction, but of a policy aimed at fulfilling, at the least possible expense, the tasks of the Secretariat as they arose out of the general development of the United Nations.

Recommendation of the Fifth Committee

16. In the light of its discussion, the Fifth Committee at its 429th meeting on 10 December 1953 approved, by 40 votes to 5, the following draft resolution suggested by the Chairman, and accordingly recommends the adoption of the draft resolution by the General Assembly:

ORGANIZATION OF THE SECRETARIAT

The General Assembly

1. *Takes note* of the proposals of the Secretary-General in his report on organization of the Secretariat (A/2544) and of his statement to the Fifth Committee at its 427th meeting;

2. *Recommends* that the Secretary-General should, to the extent possible, proceed along the lines he has proposed and prepare his 1955 budget estimates within the broad framework of these proposals, taking account of the observations and suggestions of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions contained in its thirty-sixth report to the eighth session of the General Assembly (A/2606) and of the views expressed in the Fifth Committee at its 427th and 428th meetings held on 8 December 1953.

ACTION TAKEN BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

At its 471st plenary meeting, on 9 December 1953, the General Assembly adopted the above draft resolution submitted by the Fifth Committee. For the final text see resolution 784 (VIII).

CHECK LIST OF DOCUMENTS

Document No.	Title	Page	Observations and references
A/2554	Report of the Secretary-General	1	
A/2606	Thirty-sixth report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions	4	
A/2625	Report of the Fifth Committee	6	
A/C.5/L.269	Draft report of the Fifth Committee		Same text as A/2625
A/RESOLUTION/193	Resolution adopted by the General Assembly at its 471st plenary meeting on 9 December 1953		Official Records of the General Assembly, Eighth Session, Supplement No. 17, resolution 784 (VIII)

Extract from the Report of the Secretary-General
of 21 September 1954 (document A/2731)

V. Conclusions regarding the principal units of the Secretariat at Headquarters and the top level of officials

28. General Assembly resolution 13(I) provided for the principal units of the Secretariat and authorized the appointment of certain top-level officials. The following proposals constitute departures from the provisions of that resolution. Should the General Assembly approve the reorganization plan as incorporated in the budget estimates for the year 1955, it would thereby be modifying those parts of resolution 13(I) which are inconsistent with these proposals.

29. The top-level officials of the Organization - comprising those who will have responsibility for, or supervision of, the principal units, together with the two Under-Secretaries who will have responsibility for special problems but who will not be in charge of any of the principal units and the Deputy Under-Secretaries to be appointed in certain departments - will have the status of Under-Secretaries. As a rule, the Secretary-General shall designate a top-level official to deputize for him when he is absent or unable to perform his functions.

30. Resulting from these arrangements, the word "Under-Secretaries" would be substituted for the words "Assistant Secretaries-General" in staff regulation 1.10 and for the words "Assistant Secretaries-General, Principal Directors" in staff regulation 4.5(a).

31. In presenting these new organizational arrangements, I have anticipated that the officials having the status of Under-Secretaries will be accorded the privileges specified in section 19 of the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations. That section, in providing that

the Secretary-General and all Assistant Secretaries-General would be granted the privileges and immunities of diplomatic envoys, clearly contemplated that the highest level of officials immediately under the Secretary-General should be accorded the privileges appropriate to their functions. I trust that it will be found consistent with the intentions of that section that those who would now be the highest level of officials immediately under the Secretary-General should enjoy the privileges recognized as appropriate to that status and to the responsibility it carries.

32. The creation of a single supervisory level entails a revision by the General Assembly of annex I of the staff regulations of the United Nations dealing with salaries and related allowances. My recommendations in this connexion will be submitted in another report, since I believe the General Assembly will wish to consider this question separately.

Extract from Statement made by the Secretary-General
to the Fifth Committee on 11 October 1954
(document A/C.5/580)

6. Perhaps I should preface my remarks by saying that I have detected, in the discussions that have occurred with some delegations and with the Advisory Committee, an undercurrent of concern that the organizational arrangements proposed may impose too heavy a burden upon the Secretary-General in the sense that the span of his personal and direct responsibility has been, as compared to formerly, too greatly extended. I believe that any such impression is based upon a misconception of what the proposed arrangements in fact involve and how they will operate.

7. In the first place, the number of top-level officials reporting directly to myself will be smaller than hitherto. Excluding the Technical Assistance Administration, the regional economic commissions and the Geneva Office - areas which have yet to be reviewed - the organizational arrangements that obtained in past years provided for a total of some nineteen to twenty posts at a Principal Director or higher level, with all of the encumbrances of which it was necessary for the Secretary-General to deal regularly. In this connexion the fact should not be overlooked that in the past the Secretary-General's contacts with Principal Directors were no less intensive than those with Assistant Secretaries-General, and certainly involved demands upon his time and attention comparable to those which he may be expected to have under the new plan of organization with Heads of Offices. The new arrangements, developed on the basis of the proposals endorsed in principle by the General Assembly at its last session, will mean a reduction in the number of such posts (or those of approximately equivalent status and responsibility) to a maximum of fifteen or sixteen, comprising Under-Secretaries, Deputy Under-Secretaries and Heads of Offices - that is a reduction of four to five posts.

8. The fact, however, that the number of top officials dealing regularly with the Secretary-General will show this reduction is of less importance than the fact that pressures upon the Secretary-General will at the same

be eased through the establishment of better defined and more clear-cut lines of authority. A major administrative weakness of the old system was that it led to a kind of diffusion of responsibility, which meant that lines of authority both in the substantive and strictly administrative fields tended to become confused and uncertain. Thus, in consulting with officers on one level, it was too often necessary for me also to consult simultaneously with officers on other levels. Experience under the new plan of organization has already been sufficient to convince me that we will achieve the clarity and simplification aimed at when just one top echelon is established instead of the two levels previously maintained. I cannot stress too strongly the importance of this consideration in terms of the conservation, and equally the concentration, of the Secretary-General's energy and effort. I hope that Members will bear this fact in mind in their over-all evaluation of the recommended structural and organizational arrangements, upon the elaboration of which much careful and patient thought and the collective experience of the Secretary-General and his principal assistants have been expended.