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Statement by Arthur Liveran of the Israel Delegation
at the 5-th Committee of the U.N. in the General
Debate on the reorganization of the Secretariat and
the budget estimates.

PRESS RELEASE



מְדִינַת יִשְׂרָאֵל DELEGATION OF ISRAEL TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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21 October 1954

STATEMENT BY MR. ARTHUR LIVERAN OF THE ISRAEL DELEGATION

AT THE FIFTH COMMITTEE OF THE UNITED NATIONS

IN THE GENERAL DEBATE ON THE REORGANIZATION

OF THE SECRETARIAT AND THE BUDGET ESTIMATES

On October 21, 1954

Mr. Chairman,

Turning to the first part of the dual subject matter of our debate I wish to refer to three elements only of the plan for the reorganisation of the Secretariat prepared by the Secretary-General. They are: its structure, its implementation and its wider implications.

1. STRUCTURE: My delegation views the present scheme for the reorganisation of the Secretariat as a pontoon bridge thrown across the gap between the actual and the ideal. As such it represents that which is possible rather than that which is merely desirable. On that basis my delegation is prepared to support it. My delegation further believes the cardinal feature of the plan to be its scope and comprehensiveness. The plan, it seems to us, must therefore be evaluated as an entity to be adopted or rejected on its merits as a unity. We view it as a monument rather than as a mosaic, and hence we judge it by its overall impact rather than by the value of its component parts. For that reason my delegation will refrain from expounding the reservations it would otherwise have to make concerning certain individual features of the plan. Any localised alterations, we fear, might adversely affect the tensile strength of the whole structure. We shall therefore not be able to support the specific changes proposed

by the Advisory...

by the Advisory Committee and by several delegations, despite their intrinsic value and merit.

As a corollary of this approach, we do not by our overall endorsement of the plan sanction all its individual features. Furthermore, while we do not consider orthodoxy to be the supreme virtue of administrative practice, we do not consider departures from commonly accepted practices as in themselves valuable. And we most certainly do not believe that arrangements dictated by a justified regard for existing necessities can be transformed by the mere fact of their acceptance into valid precepts of administrative theory.

We are moreover not unmindful of the pertinence of some of the fundamental criticism that has been offered on that score concerning several aspects of the plan, such as for example the setting-up of a horizontal rather than a vertical hierarchy of Under-Secretaries and their Deputies. These defects, we hold, are outweighed by the one feature that in such matters redeems all the flaws of theory - namely, our belief that the arrangement proposed will work, and that, if implemented judiciously, it will work well.

2. IMPLEMENTATION: Turning then to the second point, the implementation of the plan, there has been general recognition of the importance of timing, of phasing for the success of the plan. The differences that exist concern the correct tempo that is considered most beneficial or rather least deleterious to the Organisation. Apart from budgetary considerations, which in this context would seem to be rather peripheral and at best equivocal - the differences in the time-tables proposed are based on varying estimates of the resultant impact on the morale of the Secretariat. However, once the procedure of large-scale dismissals of present staff was eliminated -- in our view rightly so - as a practical method for achieving the desired reduction in staff, very little room would seem to remain for an artificial speed-up of the alternative methods of non-replacements of posts vacated as a result of normal turnover, transfers and consolidation.

My delegation can, therefore, lend its support to the time-table proposed by the Secretary-General as amended by his oral statement before us.

Yet, because we...

Yet, because we share the concern expressed here in so many different forms about the human aspect of this problem, we want to assure the Secretary-General that if he should find himself impelled because of such considerations, to slow down rather than to speed up the implementation of his plan, my delegation for one, would not criticize him on that score. These considerations, we feel justifiably apply not only at the highest levels of the Secretariat, but throughout its ranks.

3. WIDER IMPLICATIONS: Turning now to my last point in this context, the wider implications of the reorganisation plan, I want to refer only to its implications for one of the principal organs of the United Nations, the Secretariat.

It is evident that the reorganisation plan of the Secretary-General and the amendments proposed by the Advisory Committee are based on one fundamental assumption; that the trimmed and streamlined Secretariat emerging after the process of reorganisation will be better fitted to perform its high and important functions, than its predecessors. Yet, while rationalisation, coordination, flexibility and all the other help-maidens of good administration have a vital part to play in determining the efficacy and efficiency of an organisation, it is in the last analysis the calibre of the individuals who make up the Secretariat, that will determine its true degree of perfection. That truth which is self-evident was formally embodied in Para. 3 of Article 101 of the Charter.

"The paramount consideration in the employment of the staff and in the determination of the conditions of service shall be the necessity of securing the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity."

It acquires added importance in the light of the reorganisation plan. With the scope for new recruitment necessarily becoming more limited and the need for versatility becoming greater, the importance of every staff member measuring up to these high standards becomes proportionately greater. Moreover, these principles as laid down in the Charter apply not only to the criteria to be applied at the moment of recruitment. These paramount considerations remain constant throughout the period of employment in the determination of the conditions of service. Hence due regard must be paid, in any...

paid, in any changes, to the legitimate expectations in matters of advancement, status and position, of those already in the service of the Secretariat, who have proved that they fully measure up to the requirements of the Charter regarding standards of efficiency, competence and integrity. Any suspicion that considerations extraneous to those enumerated in the Charter might be a determining factor in such matters would be little short of disastrous for the health of the Secretariat, especially for the health of a reorganised one.

In stressing this aspect, my delegation does not wish to be misunderstood. We are equally aware of the second sentence of Para. 3 of Article 101.

"Due regard shall be paid to the importance of recruiting the staff on as wide a geographical basis as possible."

The subsidiary consideration spelled out therein, however, clearly cannot in any sense be held to derogate from the validity of the principles outlined in the first sentence. They add, but they do not detract. What they add is the important reminder which we believe to be equally self-evident, namely, that people who do fulfil the high standards set in the first sentence are not the monopoly of any one country or of any one part of the world. They can be found everywhere, in Asia as well as in Europe, in Oceania as well as in the Americas. The United Nations must draw on talent and character from all over the globe. Yet accidental features such as a particular nationality or domicile can never in themselves be considered substitutes for the individual qualities required of a Secretariat member. Any other interpretation would be derogatory to and, I am sure, would be rejected as patronising, particularly by those countries who in other contexts are sometimes referred to as less or under-developed. Like my own, they would surely never agree that their candidates could not compete on a footing of complete equality in those attributes of character and competence referred to by the Charter, and hence qualify for employment in the United Nations on the basis of their own individual merit.

In this connection the idea of selecting United Nations staff members on the basis of competitive entrance examinations - following the example of most national civil service systems - might be worthy of consideration at a further date.

It goes without...

It goes without saying that in such examinations, due regard must be paid so as to ensure absolute fairness as between different backgrounds, educational systems, etc., so as not to tip the scales unfairly in any direction.

Mr. Chairman, the Secretary General has told us that he views the present scheme as a reformation movement. It is thus only a beginning that we are asked to approve at this stage. To the efforts to continued ~~for the purpose~~ of making improvements constant and defects temporary, my delegation will lend its full support.

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