

PARIS, 30 September 2011
Original: English

Item 6 of the provisional agenda

REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL ON SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

PART IX

**GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION AND GENDER BALANCE OF THE
STAFF OF THE SECRETARIAT**

ADDENDUM

SUMMARY

Joint comments of the staff associations, ISAU and STU, on reports by the Director-General on specific matters.

I. GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF THE STAFF

A. General comments

1. Document 187 EX/6 raises serious problems as to the format adopted to present data concerning geographical distribution within the Secretariat. Squarely put, the information provided is barely comprehensible, a fact that is all the more obvious that the information concerning gender balance in the Secretariat reads with ease and transparency. For example, when it comes to geographical distribution, a distinction is established between budgetary- and extrabudgetary-funded posts, which is not applied to the data on gender balance.

2. This imbalance is spurious, since one of the main rationales behind geographic and gender policies is to ensure that the missions of the Secretariat are carried out according to the values proclaimed by the Member States: the distinction established between budgetary- and extrabudgetary-funded posts is therefore purely bureaucratic and does not pertain to the overall reason why such policies exist in the first place.

3. Secondly, the part on geographical distribution raises concerns as to the coherence of the argument provided to justify the presentation of data. Namely, most of the document presents data according to regions, which makes for more readable and transparent information, but this very information is presented very selectively. Indeed, there is no presentation of the regional distribution by individual grades, while such information is provided for gender balance. The only information by individual grade is provided for individual countries, which does not lend itself to readability and transparency.

4. In short, we are concerned with the information contained in the section on geographical distribution. It is more complex and less understandable than the information provided on gender balance. The Secretariat may answer that gender balance covers two items, as opposed to 193 (Member States), but analysing geographical distribution through a regional lens is precisely the kind of approach that significantly increases the readability of the global situation.

5. We would therefore suggest that in the future, the Secretariat present data by grade and by region, and abandon the specious argument according to which geographical distribution by country is the only official way of presenting data. Indeed, the Executive Board recognizes those regions as organic to its mode of composition. It should not be different for the Secretariat, especially when it comes to shedding light on data that the Member States deem important.

B. Specific observations

6. Despite the efforts made by the Organization towards a well-balanced **geographical distribution** of posts among staff, the situation has not improved – but rather worsened with a reduction in the number of represented Member States from 165 in 2008 to 152 in June 2011.

7. The report under review justifies the downward trend as a result of retirements of the staff indicating the measures undertaken by the Secretariat in order to improve this situation. Unfortunately the measures have not been proved to be sufficient. One might ask why? Let's look at some of them (Measure 1):

- recruitment of 10 Young Professionals from under-represented countries;
- organization of two recruitment workshops in targeted and non- and under-represented countries – however, with lack of specification and indication it is difficult to imagine who will be invited to these workshops and how they will be organized and with whom? The question seems to be appropriate as it appears that none of the workshops have yet been organized;

- organization of meetings with Secretaries-General of National Commissions – a very limited audience we would say – nevertheless two meetings have taken place until now with GRULAC and ASPEC – unfortunately no action plan has been prepared until now.

8. It appears that such measures do not bring expected results. Perhaps additional actions to improve the situation should be implemented in the Secretariat itself, in particular during the process of the selection of candidates. Experience shows that even though candidates who applied for vacant posts are from under-represented countries and meet all required criteria, priority is still given to those who are over-represented.

9. The situation will not be improved by implementing measures that have no chance of being sufficient. We are in agreement that the advertisement of new posts should target countries that are not represented or under-represented, in order to attract more applications. But this would not be done only through meetings with the Permanent Delegations. We would like to encourage ERI to collaborate with HRM in order to make sure that advertising is well placed in relevant magazines in target countries. Improving the geographical balance does not simply mean that UNESCO needs to increase the number of represented Member States, but also that it needs to improve the overall balance in terms of distribution of grades among and within the regional groups.

II. GENDER BALANCE OF STAFF

10. As regards **gender parity**, Section 2 of Document 187 EX/6 Part IX also shows that the effort by the Secretariat remains insufficient. As for one of the main targets – 50% gender parity at Director Level by 2015 – it cannot be hoped that it will be met or even approached as the rate of women at this level is well below target, at 27%, with an increase of only 3% compared to the previous biennium. At this rate, parity would not be obtained before 2025/2026.

11. The Secretariat gives information on the measures taken to improve those trends, such as establishing targets for sectors or bureaux. But these measures amount to reiterating what has been formulated before. One main issue seems to lie in the rather bureaucratic approach to these measures. Firstly, it is rather problematic to read that HRM is instructing sectors/bureaux to hire women at specific rates without specifying how this will not contradict the requirement to consider competence and efficiency first.

12. Secondly, the measures envisaged are bureaucratic in that they do not really address the fact that gender imbalances are related to the culture of the Secretariat as a whole. It can be noted that, for example, no training seems to be offered to specifically sensitize recruiting officers on gender parity, its merits and how best to achieve it – it is laudable to mainstream gender in institutional training, but a specific targeting of recruiting officers could prove useful.

13. The approaches exhibited in the document under review do not seem to recognize that gender parity should be a goal embraced and collaboratively achieved both by women and men. This is perceptible in the quite surprising view developed on the fact that women make, respectively, 69% and 52% of P-2 and P-3 staff, and that the lower rates for P-4 and P-5 levels are expected to progressively increase with career progression of P-2/P-3 staff. This seems rather inconclusive.

14. First, it remains to be demonstrated in what manner imbalances detrimental to junior male staff are a positive phenomenon (being junior, they are, after all, the least responsible for the imbalances at the ranks above them). Also, without clear indications on the age pyramid of the different grades, it is not possible to discard the hypothesis that this situation could simply mean that many female staff are in junior positions.

15. Secondly, the fact that there are more women than men in the lower positions does not allow one to conclude that the former will automatically progress in their careers, especially if one recalls that while the proportion of women at P-5 has declined (by a small margin), it was increasing at P-2.

16. Moreover, in studying the trends and measures presented in document 187 EX/6 Part IX, it must be concluded that the Organization is not on track. As bureaucratic as it may be, the efforts developed by HRM reveal that gender equality still has to take root in the culture of the Secretariat. The view does not seem to be generally held that imbalances in terms of gender and geographical distribution are a problem precisely because they imply that some people (staff or candidates) are in fact not evaluated on the sole basis of their competence. The fact that recruitment is entirely decentralized to Sectors means that the application of the principle of favoring female candidates at equal merit often depends on gender-sensitivity of the recruiting manager. It also means that there are no mechanisms to counterbalance the screening of well-qualified women and unrepresented candidates at the early stages of the recruitment process, before short-listing candidates for interviews.

17. Finally, another matter of concern is the work/life balance issue, one of the three elements of the Action Plan for Gender Parity. The current Action Plan focuses nearly exclusively on spouse employment, which is only one aspect of this multidimensional subject. For example, work/life balance is also a matter of parenting which includes maternal and parental leave for all, including temporary staff, and good conditions for child care support (the kindergarden issue). It is a fact that policies on these items are contained in the Manual, but it remains a fact that important improvement is needed if a culture of gender parity is to be an integral part of the culture of the Secretariat.

18. The two Staff Associations therefore remain concerned that progress on achieving geographical and gender goals has been slow, and may further be affected by the proposed strategy of HRM, in particular, proposals on recruitment, mobility and contractual arrangements.

President of ISAU

President of STU