

OHR (MIS-)MANAGEMENT

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The Office of Human Resources Management is not a traditional "oversight" body, but, after decades of somnolence as a modest personnel office, it has been given major responsibilities by the General Assembly during the past decade for monitoring and ensuring the full and proper application of personnel policies and accountability matters, and in particular to be the overall and day-to-day guarantor of the UN Charter's mandate for staff, namely that of "securing the highest standards of efficiency, competence, and integrity ..."

This evolving role OHRM role has been defined by the General Assembly and in the Secretary-General's related reports, as indicated in the following quotes:

"[The General Assembly] ... reiterates the role, authority, and responsibility of the [OHRM] of the Secretariat in establishing human resources policies and guidelines as well as in ensuring compliance with recruitment, placement, and career development procedures throughout the Secretariat;

Decides that the [OHRM] shall remain the central authority for the monitoring and approval of the recruitment and placement of staff and for the interpretation of the regulations and rules of the Organization and their enforcement; ...

Recognizes the central role of the [OHRM] in ensuring the full implementation of

basic human resources mandates set by the General Assembly in the context of recruitment and placement processes;"

"Human resources management," General Assembly resolution 53/221 of **23 April 1999**, section II, Role of the Office of Human Resources Management of the Secretariat". [emphasis added.]

"IV. Delegation of authority and accountability ...

3. [The General Assembly] ... also notes that no comprehensive system of accountability and responsibility has been established;

10. Reiterates its request to the Secretary-General [see para. II.2 of resolution 51/226] to enhance managerial accountability with respect to human resources management decisions, including imposing sanctions in case of demonstrated mismanagement of staff and willful neglect of or disregard for established rules and procedures, while safeguarding the right of due process of all staff members, including managers."

"Human resources management," General Assembly resolution 53/221 of **23 April 1999**, paras. II.6 and IV. 3, 10. [emphasis added.]

"VII.2 [The General Assembly] ...Emphasizes that the administrative and managerial discretionary powers of the Secretary-General should be in conformity with the relevant provisions of the Charter;

3. Reiterates that every staff member ... shall be responsible and accountable to the Secretary General, in accordance with financial rule 114.1 and staff 112.3;

4. Emphasizes that any delegation of authority should be in accordance with the Charter and the regulations and rules ...;

5. Stresses that rules and regulations governing separation from service shall be followed strictly;

7. Requests the Secretary-General to continue to improve accountability and responsibility ... and monitoring and control mechanisms ... and report on the implementation of his proposals [in 2002] ...

8. Report ... [in 2002] on the progress achieved, including with regard to management irregularities;;

10. Decides to further consider the issue of a robust monitoring capacity in the Office of Human Resources Management ... and [requests] an analytical and thorough report thereon [in 2002]. "

"Human resources management," General Assembly resolution 55/258 of **14 June 2001**, "Section VII., Delegation of authority and accountability." [emphasis added.]

As decision-making authority is devolved to programme managers, the roles and responsibilities of the central service provider, the Department of Management [which contains OHRM]... will need to be reviewed.

Action 32. In order to continue efforts to improve management:

(a) a thorough review will be conducted of delegated authority in order to increase the capacity and flexibility of managers to manage ...

(b) The roles and responsibilities of [DAM] ... will be redefined in order to support the increased delegation of authority;

(c) Training of managers will be strengthened across the Organization ..."

"Strengthening of the United Nations: An agenda for further change: Report of the Secretary-General," UN document A/57/387 of **9 September 2002**, paras.

"4. [The General Assembly requests the Secretary-General to report to it in 2004] ... in a comprehensive manner on the achievements of the human resources management reform, when sufficient information will be available on the experiences of the Secretariat with ... implementation ...;

5. ... conduct a study [by the OIOS] on the impact of ... [the reforms], in particular on the improvement of recruitment, placement, promotion and training, including an assessment of the role of the central review bodies and mobility ...;

6. ... ensure that all future reports on the implementation of [these] ... reforms focus on the results of such measures;

10. ... ensure the accountability of programme managers in the staff selection process, in close collaboration with the [OHRM], and to report thereon [in 2004];"

"Human resources management," General Assembly resolution 57/305 of **1 May 2003**, Sections I and II.

The UN's major resource and expenditure is not buildings or tangible products, but the quality of, and the services provided by, its staff. However, from its very first days, ambiguity over comparative educational credentials worldwide, the requirements and great interest in equitable geographic distribution of posts, and the UN's always highly-politicized nature, have led the Secretariat to hire people largely by nationality, and too often to let Member State diplomatic missions actually select staff.

This process was also combined with the "Noblemaire" principle, which states that all UN staff shall receive the salary and benefits of the highest-paid national civil service (traditionally the USA). For many countries, this means UN salaries and benefits that are many times greater than those available in their national diplomatic or civil service. When combined with vague job duties and a non-transparent and soft personnel system, almost anyone with the right connections could (and has) gotten into the UN Secretariat to relax alongside the working UN staff.

The noble aims of the UN Charter with respect to the staff (the first quote) were undermined by a tawdry set of 'behind the scenes' UN personnel practices. They date back to the UN's beginnings but gradually became thoroughly entrenched, as indicated by the six quotes which follow.

"Article 100. ...

2. Each Member of the United Nations undertakes to respect the exclusively international character of the responsibilities of the Secretary-General and the staff and not to seek to influence them in the discharge of their responsibilities.

Article 101.

1. The staff shall be appointed by the Secretary-General under regulations established by the General Assembly. ...

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

Charter of the United Nations, **1945**, Articles 97, 100, and 101.

"In 1946 the [UN] Secretariat had to be constituted. It had an initial core, which was the staff of the Preparatory Commission, numbering about 350 officials From that nucleus, it expanded within six months to about 3,000. As noted by W.R. Crocker:

'All but a tiny minority had been appointed by the end of August, and most were appointed between April and July. Where did this swarm come from? Some of them had had, like most Assistant Secretaries-General, been delegates or on delegation staffs in the early days. Some were friends of delegates, and got through [by] what is known in international secretariats as political pressure -- which can easily be repulsed if the authorities have the will. Some -- and possible the largest number -- found their way through the friendship of a senior officer.'

Walter R. Crocker, "Some notes on the United Nations Secretariat", International Organization, Vol. IV, No. 4, **November 1950**, pp. 609-610, as discussed in Henri Reymond, "Some unresolved problems of the international civil service", *Public Administration Review* (US), May/June 1970, pp. 225-236, [238].

"The uncontested establishment of [US government screening and approving personnel for UN service in the early 1950s] nullified the Charter concept of an independent and effective civil service, inflicting untold damage on the potential of the United Nations. Other governments would thenceforth [and aggressively] also install their nominees in virtually all significant, and in many insignificant, U. N. posts. Hundreds of meaningless and costly positions would be created throughout the leadership of the U. N. system for the sole purpose of accommodating national candidates -- some of whom [were] devoid of qualifications Unwanted in their homelands [or] trailing rumors of incompetence or scandal.

The useful work of field missions would, on occasion, be similarly encumbered by such superfluous emissaries, dispatched to lucrative senior field assignments

In 1978 [Secretary-General] Waldheim would inform his unhappy staff that 'the General Assembly has made it clear the geographical distribution of the staff is the over-riding factor' -- without reference to the contrary mandate of the Charter.

By the nineteen-eighties, the *Times* would report the view of 'one Western ambassador' that 'You try to get as many posts as possible for your own nationals. This is wrong, but everybody does it.'

Shirley Hazzard, on the UN in the **1950s**, in "Breaking Faith, Part I", The New Yorker, September 25, 1989, pp. 63-99, p. 74.

"A distinguished professor of international law once deplored the fact that 'the League of Nations has been abandoned to the diplomats', but the UN Secretariat is much more dependent on the national diplomatic bureaucracies. They derive invaluable flexibility and power from having additional posts at their disposal ... to confer favors but

also to displace unwanted staff. ... the incentives are all the greater because many UN posts, especially the senior ones, are much sought after because of the [high] scales of pay ... and the prestige they carry.

A diplomatic ideology has even developed at the UN, [that] there is no higher dignity than that of Ambassador, holders of this title being by definition capable of taking up any high-ranking post, even in a technical field. This naturally generates a bias in favor of 'generalists' at the expense of other professionals."

Maurice Bertrand, "The recruitment policy of United Nations staff", in de Cooker, Chris, ed., International Administration: Law and Management Practice in International Organisations, UNITAR, Martinus Nijhoff, Dordrecht, the Netherlands, **1989**, II.2/1-9, pp. II/2 and /3.

"The conventional wisdom in Third World upmarket employment circles is that the best job opportunities in these recessionary days are still available in the United Nations system -- a bewildering alphabet soup rich in countless commissions, subcommissions, fact-finding missions, agencies, expert groups, blue-ribbon panels and blue-helmet peacekeeping operations. For the most part, it is a sprawling secretive system, where many modern-day rajahs reign with conspicuous disregard for accountability"

Pranay Gupte, "United Nations shenanigans", Newsweek International, **May 24, 1993**, p. 6.

"For months, [US presidential candidate John Kerry] has advocated broader international oversight [in Iraq] that might open the door to additional peacekeeping contributions and generate some real support for nation-building there. Now he has begun to elaborate on how that oversight should be structured, drawing sensible lessons from successes and failures of the recent past.

Kerry recognizes that the United Nations cannot offer any magic bullet solutions for Iraq, and that working with the UN Secretary general, Kofi Annan, and his special representative Lakhdar Brahimi, cannot be a substitute for broad cooperation with all the major powers represented in the Security Council. ... Kerry also proposes designating an international high commissioner for Iraq whose office would be outside the barely functional, patronage-driven UN personnel system. That would permit the recruitment of a capable staff and create some safeguards against the kind of wholesale corruption that is alleged to have vitiated the UN's oil-for-food program in Iraq.

Kerry's ideas ... would be extremely hard to carry out now ... but they at least reflect a realistic view of what the United Nations -- and the United States -- can and cannot do."

"Kerry's vision for Iraq," International Herald Tribune, **May 7, 2004** .

The damaging consequences of these accumulating, unofficial UN personnel policies have continued on now for almost six decades, as shown by a compilation of major system facets and procedures:

-- the UN has a complex system of "geographic distribution" (i.e., a quota system, applying to less and less posts as UN staffing has expanded and became more temporary, but always there in spirit) to share important professional and above UN "posts" among all countries, under elaborate formulas and detailed statistics and

published listings which highlight the battle by every country, region, and grouping to ensure that they are getting their "fair share" of these UN jobs, on a unit-by-unit basis;

-- a tradition of recruiting people not by expert qualifications or even by people, but simply by country, as shown by the often-repeated story of the man who, when asked what his job was in the UN Secretariat, stated simply "I am a Saudi Arabian";

As cited in Aamir Ali, "The international civil service: The idea and the reality", in Chris De Cooker, ed., International administration: Law and management practice in international organisations, UNITAR, Martinus Nijhoff, Dordrecht, the Netherlands, 1989, pp. II.2 1-9.

-- a long-standing reliance on Member State missions to the UN to provide candidates for UN jobs which, despite various efforts to make the process more open and competitive, is still an-often cozy insider process favoring diplomats and their friends and relatives;

-- published UN job announcements, which apparently require an impressive list of detailed professional qualifications, but include an "or other similar experience" loophole which very often becomes the precise category on which the actual choice is made (or an announcement artfully listing extremely specific and "tailor-made" requirements that ensure selection of a candidate who has already been chosen);

-- a detailed hiring and promotion system which, until very recently, required many cumbersome consultations, reviews and rules, but also did and still does allow UN personnel officials to exercise the "Secretary-General's discretion" (while also purportedly monitoring the integrity of the personnel system for the General Assembly) to make "exceptions" to the rules, particularly in personnel decisions when posts are at stake and political passions are high;

-- the overall mind-numbing obsession with political games, balancing, rivalry, competition, and posturing in UN Secretariat staffing decisions and day-to-day operations (as one veteran put it, in personnel selection "the UN hires a country, not an individual.")

UN personnel activities were in hibernation for the first 50 years of the Organization's history, and have spent the past decade slowly waking up. This is shown by their designations: first as a lowly "personnel administration" group, then a renaming to the more positive title of "Office of Personnel

Services (OPS), and finally, and -- at the premature insistence of the "Group of 18" experts -- as the "Office of Human Resources Management" (OHRM) from 1986 onward.

A staff report urging the reform of staffing processes and conditions in 1971 summarized the sorry situation nicely:

"Few would dispute the fact that conditions of service in the Secretariat are no longer adequate to secure a reasonable supply of staff of the quality described in the UN Charter. In addition there have been weaknesses in the recruitment process itself: inattention to candidates' levels of training, responsibility and experience, artificially restricted choice of candidates, failure to use properly the probation period ... submission to pressure from delegations, personal bias, delay and uncertainty in offers to candidates, absence of a coherent career policy and of effective in-service training. All these factors are prejudicial to high quality recruitment. Internal selection committees have tended to fall into disrepute and have permitted practices to flourish which encourage the view of the staff that the International Civil Service is in a process of decline."

Recommendations for the reform of UN staff conditions made by the Council of the Federation of International Civil Servants Associations in **December 1971**, as quoted in Shirley Hazzard, Defeat of an ideal: A study of the self-destruction of the United Nations, Macmillan, London, 1973, p. 113.

A 1971 JIU report by Maurice Bertrand found a strong general dissatisfaction among Member States, management, and staff about personnel problems, and particularly a recruitment crisis. The report detailed reforms which would address serious gaps in long-term forecasting of personnel needs, a detailed personnel policy, in-service training, assignment planning, and much-improved recruitment machinery, all of which could finally lead toward a "modernized" personnel office.

Joint Inspection Unit, "Report of the [JIU] on personnel problems in the United Nations," A/8454 (Parts I and II), **5 October 1971**, pp. 1-18, 486.

Considerable reform efforts were indeed made during the 1970s, but beneath the surface not much changed. In 1986 the "Group of 18" report finally launched a new reform impetus. It found that:

"Personnel policy and management in the United Nations has suffered as a result of the considerable political and other pressures that have influenced the selection of staff. The Secretary-General should exercise greater leadership in personnel matters and ensure that the selection of staff is done strictly in accordance with the principles of the Charter. He should improve the management of human resources, protect the authority of the official in charge of personnel and instruct all other senior officials to refrain from influencing the selection of staff. ..."

Report of the Group of High-Level Intergovernmental Experts to Review the Efficiency of the Administrative and Financial Functioning of the United Nations, UN document A/41/49, **1986**, Recommendation 41. [emphasis added]

In 1992 new Secretary-General Butros Butros-Ghali confronted a situation not much different than that of 1971, as cited above.

"He concluded that the organization had 'been operating in slow motion.' It required 'optimum use of its human resources, 'new ways of thinking', 'modern management practices' to enhance its operations, and introduction of 'an integrated approach to all the interrelated managerial issues.' But it could not do these things over the long term without 'fundamental changes in the present outmoded system of personnel management."

"Secretary-General's statement to the Fifth Committee, ST/IC/1992/73 of **12 November 1992**, p. 8, as summarized in

Joint Inspection Unit, "Advancement of the status of women in the United Nations Secretariat in an era of 'human resources management' and 'accountability': A new beginning?," UN document A/49/176, **1994**.

The outgoing UN top manager, Richard Thornburgh, stated in his departing report of March 1993 to the Secretary-General that:

"Current problems in what you have correctly identified as 'the present outmoded system of personnel management' constitute a major stumbling block to true reform within the Organization.

Defects exist in nearly every aspect of present personnel practice. Recruitment has been undertaken on a more or less haphazard basis and consumes an inordinate amount of time. Training programmes are insufficient. Promotion exercises have become inordinately complicated to the point of being nearly unworkable ... Discipline and dismissal procedures are encumbered by seemingly interminable appeals processes.

The result is too much 'deadwood' doing too little work and too few good staff members doing too much, over-extending themselves sometimes to the point where they have become counter-productive."

Dick Thornburgh, Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management, "Report to the Secretary-General of the United Nations," **1 March 1993**, pp. 8-9.

In 1994 the JIU reported that while modern organizations must plan human resource needs strategically, the UN Secretariat was still locked into the old "personnel administration" stage of operations. OHRM had had a policy unit earlier, but abolished it during a financial crisis in 1987. The JIU argued that it must restore a strategic "brain" and drastically upgrade professional skills in OHRM, since only a few OHRM staff had university training in personnel matters or previous personnel experience before joining the Office. Accountability improvements were also urgently needed:

"At present, accountability for personnel improvement actions is often given to 'OHRM and programme managers.' Unfortunately, accountability assigned to everyone usually means the accountability of no one. ...

A central element of accountability is performance and progress measures. ...

{A} biennial human resources report ... must provide analysis and carefully-chosen statistics which show where the real problems and bottlenecks are.

Constructive, informed dialogue can then take place and informed solutions can be developed. ... for example ... the average length of time that professional posts remain vacant [and analysis of why] ... what percentage of staff have had their performance evaluated [as required, and where do the problems occur and why] ... [and] how many staff members have been trained in what specific fields ...

Careful ... performance ... results data and statistics should be developed and maintained on human resources ... [and] highlight successes, problems, or constraints ... lessons learned, or corrective actions should follow. ...

[a systematic biennial report would] ... clearly demonstrate that the Secretariat is determined to provide firm management accountability and disciplined improvement in all facets of the 'most precious asset' managed by its personnel office and programme managers."

Joint Inspection Unit, Ch. V., "A proper human resources approach," in "Advancement of the status of women in the United Nations Secretariat in an era of 'human resources management' and 'accountability': A new beginning?", UN document A/49/176, **1994**, paras. 127-134, 141, 146, 153, 84-89.
[emphasis added.]

At last, in 1994, under heavy General Assembly pressure, a Secretary-General's report had to make the humiliating but unavoidable admission that:

"[This report] outlines a strategy to modernize and re-energize human resources management in the [UN Secretariat] ...

[While the UN's role and mandates have expanded], commensurate changes and modernization in human resources management have not occurred. As a result, [such] management has been fragmented, bureaucratic and incapable of dealing expeditiously with ever-changing demands ... The Office of Human Resources Management has been largely unable to address properly [its essential] planning and management functions. ... [This in turn has] partially contributed to the slow deployment of field missions, inadequate people management, low staff morale, and insufficient mobility. Thus, the time is overdue ... to introduce changes to maximize the contribution of [UN] human resources."

"A strategy for the management of the human resources of the Organization: Revised estimates ...: Report of the Secretary-General ", UN document A/C.5/49/5 of **21 October 1994**, paras. 1 and 23.

However, the rest of the report labored to explain and expand upon this frank *mea culpa*. An incisive assessment by the *International Documents Review* of this report stated that

"A strategy was presented to the General Assembly in a document of atrociously low quality, even by UN standards. The writing is crusty with jargon, repetitive, and structured like a multi-jointed creature out of Dr. Seuss. ...

It makes the rather startling revelation that [OHRM] does not have a planning component. It does not explain why this is so, or how the Office has managed to operate for nearly five decades without planning its activities. As if enunciating a new discovery, the report says that 'Planning is essential ...' [Its] absence ... has contributed significantly to current OHRM management weaknesses. ...'

[The report then states that] 'It is intended that [UN] senior management be involved in the planning process and party to all important decision-making relating to human resources planning and change.' (Traditionally, senior management has considered OHRM a generally unnecessary encumbrance, to be called into action only to

fend off unsuitable offerings of personnel from pushy ambassadors. Its powers of locating competent staff for recruitment are held in such low esteem that no senior manager in his right mind would initiate a request without having someone already identified, or even on board as a consultant or short-term contract employee.)"

"Strategy to improve UN staff management and quality explained in atrociously written report," International Documents Review (New York), 7 November 1994, pp. 4-5. [emphasis added]

Subsequently, the discretionary exceptions and lack of transparency about system functioning, and problems with controlling UN posts, have continued on. Matters (and control) have become even more complicated, since half or more of UN Secretariat staff are now "extra-budgetary" staff, or temporary or short-term staff to meet fluctuating programme levels, in particular in UN peacekeeping, humanitarian, and other field operations around the world. This *ad hoc* and perpetually "temporary" process has put very heavy additional pressure on OHRM to administer staff increasingly scattered at isolated field locations and assignments, and requiring frequent contract-renewal decisions.

In 1995, Secretary-General Annan, then the head of UN peacekeeping and himself a former personnel chief, optimistically and publicly asserted that "the days of gifted amateurs are over." In contrast and in fact, however, in late 1997 the United States Ambassador to the UN casually offered former US presidential intern Monica Lewinsky a UN job (but she reportedly turned it down, saying she preferred to switch to the private sector). This certainly suggests that the days of grossly ungifted amateurs finding jobs in the UN continue on, presumably with the active participation of all 190-some UN Member States.

"Inspectors score U.N. staff recruitment procedures", Diplomatic World Bulletin, March 20-27, 1995, p. 1, and Goldstein, Amy, and John Mintz, "The high-level job hunt for intern: Colleagues were unimpressed by Lewinsky, so why the effort?", International Herald Tribune, 1998.

A very detailed two-part report by the JIU in 1995 and 1997 certainly found many serious problems in OHRM implementation of its major functions. A first report on recruitment discussed a list of major deficiencies: lack of objective criteria, an absence of planning, obsolete methods, long delays, and improper "regularization" of short-term staff. It cited unacceptable practices, such as favouritism, circumvention of the principle of competitiveness, and interference with OHRM authority.

The JIU reports also emphasized that it would be premature and counter-productive to delegate such essential functions as

"hire", "fire," and "promote" before the necessary conditions were created, all personnel procedures were reviewed and improved as the General Assembly had required, and appropriate mechanisms for reporting, accountability, and follow-up were put in place.

Joint Inspection Unit, "Inspection of the application of United Nations recruitment, placement, and promotion policies", Part I, "Recruitment", UN document A/49/845, 1995, "Summary", pp. 5-7.

The second part of the JIU report, on placement and promotions, found that in the impressive new human resources management reforms the challenge, as always, lay in implementation, and that the new system suffered most of the flaws and deficiencies of the old one. The report observed that

" ... there are no systematic means for ensuring that equally qualified people fill the same or comparable posts within the various occupational groups. And since there exist no clear across-the-board criteria for advancement in the professional grades, promotions may be granted either on a rigorous or open-handed basis, which depends not only on the individual supervisor but also on the presence or absence of powerful patrons elsewhere, both in and outside the organization. ...

... it is not clear whether programme managers are accountable [under the General Assembly's 1993 management accountability reform] ... It may be observed, for instance, that both the number of placement- and promotion-related grievances and the proportions of decisions by the internal justice bodies in appellants' favour are high. To date, it is the Organization, and not respective managers, who is paying the price, including financial compensation, for failure to follow the relevant policy decisions."

Joint Inspection Unit, "Inspection of the application of United Nations recruitment, placement, and promotion policies", Part II, "Placement and Promotions", UN document A/51/656, 1997, "Summary", pp. iv - vi.

In an angry resolution in early 1997, the General Assembly underscored these implementation problems, deploring in particular (see the last item) the poor performance in following proper human resource procedures in the OHRM itself. "Recalling" the Secretary-General's grand new strategy, the Assembly stated that it

"1.2. Regrets with deep concern that further progress in the implementation of the adopted strategy has not been achieved, and urges the Secretary-General to take the necessary action to ensure its full implementation ...;

3. Regrets the unsuccessful efforts to develop a management environment and culture in the Organization that enables staff members to contribute their maximum potential, effectiveness, and efficiency;

2. Requests the Secretary-General to enhance managerial accountability with respect to human resources management decisions, including imposing sanctions in cases of demonstrated mismanagement of staff and willful neglect of or disregard for established rules and procedures, while safeguarding the due process rights of all staff members, including managers; ...

4. Deplores the high number of exceptions to the established procedures for the recruitment, placement, and promotion of staff, in particular in the Office of Human Resources Management;"

"Human resources management", General Assembly resolution 51/226 of 25

April 1997, Part I, paras. 2-3, Part II, paras.2 and-4.
[emphasis added]

During the late 1990s, the OHRM nevertheless attempted to leave behind its role as a lowly servant attending to allowances, benefits, and assignments. Suddenly, it was to become a manager, a strategist, and a supporter, monitor, and facilitator. There is considerable and continuing uncertainty about whether and how well the OHRM is fulfilling this very important function, as discussed in the subsection on Monitoring which ends this OHRM subsection. Nevertheless, the OHRM was then, and is still now, to be the overall and day-to-day guarantor of the UN Charter's mandate for staff, namely that of "securing the highest standards of efficiency, competence, and integrity ...".

Unfortunately, OHRM was called on to undertake its new leadership role, and especially its new planning and monitoring activities, at the very same time that the new Secretary-General, Kofi Annan and the Secretariat launched and largely achieved the prime strategy of delegating authority to newly-liberated UN managers, as discussed previously in the archive subsection on The Winner: "Free the managers".

These conflicts were also revealed in an article in early 1998 on a project which the new head of OHRM was undertaking for a "thorough review" of UN staff matters. She sought delegation of 'maximum responsibility' to line managers, because central control is 'excessive.' She stated that:

"OHRM will convene ... a task force of experts [to make a] 'clear delineation of responsibilities' [which] is expected to lead to a reduction in micro-management.

[The IDR then notes that] Micromanagement by intergovernmental bodies is an index of the lack of trust between the majority of delegations and the UN Secretariat. ... [If this trend is to be reversed] there must be a much clearer conceptualization of change, a balanced explanation of implications, and an absolute sincerity of purpose. The current perception of the Secretariat among many delegations is that in terms of personnel policy it is confused, does not understand the full implications of what is proposed, and has a hidden agenda. ...

In pushing for reorientation, Ms. Salim speaks some home truths... 'We can no longer assume that a [20-year] staff member has developed the necessary managerial and supervisory skills' ... there is 'widespread staff distrust of management' and the UN's 'organizational culture is one in which advancement is generally expected on the basis of longevity rather than performance.'"

"UN personnel chief reviewing all aspects of management in bid to simplify controls, delegate authority," International Documents Review, **16 February 1998**, p. 2. [emphasis added.]

In 1998, OHRM stated that "A fundamental reorientation of human resources management is a formidable task," and that there

were still very major shortcomings that impeded the effective use of staff resources and had to be attended to. It argued that:

"Managers have limited responsibility over their human and financial resources. This leads directly to the erosion of accountability at all levels of the Organization;

Complicated rules and procedures have served to discourage the recruitment, advancement, and mobility of staff, affecting the UN's capacity to move the right person to the right place at the right time. This is essential in a global organization which is increasingly expected to act quickly to address complex crises and changing priorities;

Inadequate human resources planning has impaired the UN's ability to identify short and longer-term staffing needs of the Organization;

Insufficient investment has been made in building the UN's substantive and managerial capacity. Systematic development programmes for managers have only been put in place very recently."

"Staff become focus of United Nations modernization: New management culture key to revitalization," United Nations Focus Series, No. 4, **November 1998**, p. 2. [emphasis added.]

In April 1999 the General Assembly biennial resolution on human resources management noted that the management accountability system had still not been established; the Secretary-General's intention to further "streamline" procedures and delegate authority to managers; and repeated the need for an accountability mechanism and sanctions for misbehaving managers.

The Assembly also reaffirmed a series of its other resolutions of the 1990s on human resources matters, and then emphasized its own role in thoroughly analyzing and approving posts and financial resources to fully implement mandated programmes, and that human resources management reforms should conform to the UN Charter and the rules. It concluded as well that the OHRM was responsible for

" ... ensuring compliance with recruitment, placement, and career development procedures throughout the Secretariat;

... the central authority for the monitoring and approval of the recruitment and placement of staff and for the interpretation of the regulations and rules of the Organization and their enforcement;;

[and] ... ensuring the full implementation of basic human resources mandates set by the General Assembly in the context of recruitment and placement processes;"

"Human resources management," General Assembly resolution 53/221 of **23 April 1999**, sections I and II.

Yet it is IO Watch's opinion that Secretary-General Annan, rather than taking time to consolidate the major changes of his 1997 efforts to "free the managers" and firmly ensure that the old habits of political favoritism and manipulation of personnel policies had truly been vanquished by a solid set of management accountability processes and sanctions, forged ahead vigorously to establish new levels of managerial freedom.

In his 2000 report on human resources management reform, he set out ten "building blocks" of reform for the next stage of reform, beginning with human resources planning, streamlined rules, and a very detailed section and annex on changes in recruitment, placement and promotion. He stated that the latter processes were complex and slow, were mistrusted by staff, and that managers "found it paper-intensive." He argued that "diffuse decision-making" led to lack of personal accountability of managers, and proposed therefore that, henceforth, rationalized and "streamlined" processes should be applied, and managers should take the final decision on the selection of their staff. [Mentioned only briefly and bluntly was that the fact that a long-standing tradition, staff appointment and promotion bodies, had been abolished:

"Staff involvement in the actual selection of candidates would cease."

"Human resources management reform: Report of the Secretary-General", A/55/253 of **1 August 2000**, paras. 33-37 and Annex II, esp. para. 8.

The Secretary-General noted that "considerable concern" had been expressed about programme managers taking over these functions, and agreed that specific accountability mechanisms would be critical. In case of any problems found by newly-structured central review bodies, they would be swiftly considered, and OHRM or the Department of Management would act as the "final decision makers in case of dissension between programme managers and the central review body."

"Human resources management reform: Report of the Secretary-General", A/55/253 of **1 August 2000**, paras. 33-37 and Annex II, paras. 1-8, 25.

In a separate section, Mr. Annan observed that the new stages of reform implied major changes in the role and functions of OHRM, as well as those of managers and administrative offices, which would now take over day-to-day personnel functions. This would eliminate duplication and allow OHRM to concentrate on policy, guidance and assistance to managers (if requested), and monitoring compliance. In a related section, he cited a "human resources action plan" as the key accountability mechanism for intervention where needed Secretariat-wide on personnel actions, including an "exceptions log" in which all decisions to approve exceptions are recorded and explained [a notable improvement, if true.]

"Human resources management reform: Report of the Secretary-General", A/55/253 of **1 August 2000**, paras.76-79, and Annex I, paras. 9-10..

In 2002, the Secretary-General cited the progress made in implementing the ten "building blocks" of reform he had laid out

in 2000, and stated that evidence of cultural change "is already beginning to be seen." For the future, he said that system improvement would continue, with still more changes, seeking to enable the UN:

"to attract, develop, and retain staff of the highest quality [but also to] continue to improve accountability and responsibility in ... human resource management, as well as monitoring mechanisms."

"Human resources management reform: Report of the Secretary-General," UN document A/57/293 of **8 August 2002**, paras. 2-12.

His report also stated that the new staff selection system that integrates recruitment, placement, managed mobility and promotion was implemented in May 2002, after extensive consultations. The next steps would concentrate on completing the institutionalization of the new system, including the strengthening and implementation of mechanisms for the delegation of human resources authority and its monitoring.

"Human resources management reform: Report of the Secretary-General," UN document A/57/293 of **8 August 2002**, paras. 26-34.

However, Mr. Annan added more "fuel to the fire" of managerial liberation in his "agenda for further change" of 2002, in which he stated that:

"Improving the quality of management was a priority of my first term. I have put great emphasis on establishing clear lines of responsibility and ensuring that managers are held accountable ... I am confident that [our] new system of recruitment, by giving managers primary responsibility for staff selection, will lead to a new level of accountability and empowerment. ...

I intend to adopt additional measures to cut unnecessary layers of bureaucracy. At present, the Organization recruits highly qualified individuals, for management functions -- yet its procedures do not allow them to manage a budget, procure what they need for everyday activities or authorize travel for their staff.

As decision-making authority is devolved to programme managers, the roles and responsibilities of the central service provider, the Department of Management [which contains OHRM] ... will need to be reviewed.

Action 32. In order to continue efforts to improve management:

(a) a thorough review will be conducted of delegated authority in order to increase the capacity and flexibility of managers to manage ...

(b) The roles and responsibilities of [DAM] ... will be redefined in order to support the increased delegation of authority;

(c) Training of managers will be strengthened across the Organization ..."

"Strengthening of the United Nations: An agenda for further change: Report of the Secretary-General," UN document A/57/387 of **9 September 2002**, paras. 188-190.

Note: Discussion of this topic continues in the subsection on OHR (Mis-)management II.