
Article 8

Contents

	<i>Paragraphs</i>	<i>Page</i>
Text of Article 8		
Introductory note	1–3	91
I. General survey	4–7	92
II. Analytical summary of practice	8–17	93
A. Participation of men and women in the United Nations Secretariat	8–15	93
1. Provisions concerning recruitment, appointment and promotion under conditions of equality	8–12	93
2. Provisions concerning equality in the work environment	13–15	93
B. Participation of men and women in other United Nations organs	16–17	94

Article 8

Text of article 8

The United Nations shall place no restrictions on the eligibility of men and women to participate in any capacity and under conditions of equality in its principal and subsidiary organs.

Introductory note

1. The advancement of women in the United Nations system continued to be not only a policy priority, but also an integral part of the policies and procedures of human resources management and of the overall efforts of the Organization to achieve gender equality, development and peace. Full compliance with Article 8 in all aspects of the work of the Organization continued to be regarded as an imperative, not only for reasons of equality, but also to enhance the effectiveness of the Secretariat and the credibility and leadership role of the United Nations in advancing the status of women worldwide.
2. Following the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action by the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995,⁶¹⁰ the General Assembly held its twenty-third special session on “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”⁶¹¹ and adopted a political declaration and outcome document entitled “Further actions and initiatives to implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action”.⁶¹² In 2005, Member States of the United Nations carried out a 10-year review of progress in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in the context of the forty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women. A report of the Secretary-General entitled “Review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of the special session of the General Assembly entitled ‘Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century’” covered the 12 critical areas of concern and emerging issues identified at the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly.⁶¹³
3. The present study follows the structure of past *Supplements* and focuses on the work of the principal organs of the United Nations and the Secretary-General.

⁶¹⁰ *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

⁶¹¹ See also [A/55/341](#).

⁶¹² GA resolution S-23/3.

⁶¹³ [E/CN.6/2005/2](#).

I. General survey

4. The financial crisis faced by the United Nations, low staff turnover, recruitment freezes and the downsizing of the Organization had a continuing⁶¹⁴ negative impact on recruitment at all levels. However, efforts were made to ensure that women were not disproportionately affected.

5. During the period under review, the relevant paragraphs of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action were the conceptual framework for actions towards the advancement of women and were reaffirmed by the General Assembly in its respective resolutions following up on the Fourth World Conference on Women and full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly.⁶¹⁵

6. Notably, in the context of the World Summit Outcome adopted in General Assembly resolution 60/1, the Heads of State and Government expressed their conviction that “progress for women is progress for all”.⁶¹⁶ They further reaffirmed that the full and effective implementation of the goals and objectives of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly is an essential contribution to achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration, and resolved to promote gender equality and eliminate pervasive gender discrimination by:

“(a) Eliminating gender inequalities in primary and secondary education by the earliest possible date and at all educational levels by 2015;

“(b) Guaranteeing the free and equal right of women to own and inherit property and ensuring secure tenure of property and housing by women;

“(c) Ensuring equal access to reproductive health;

“(d) Promoting women’s equal access to labour markets, sustainable employment and adequate labour protection;

“(e) Ensuring equal access of women to productive assets and resources, including land, credit and technology;

“(f) Eliminating all forms of discrimination and violence against women and the girl child, including by ending impunity and by ensuring the protection of civilians, in particular women and the girl child, during and after armed conflicts in accordance with the obligations of States under international humanitarian law and international human rights law;

“(g) Promoting increased representation of women in Government decision-making bodies, including through ensuring their equal opportunity to participate fully in the political process”.⁶¹⁷

To that end, the Heads of State and Government also undertook to promote actively the mainstreaming of a gender perspective in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and social spheres and to strengthen the capabilities of the United Nations system in the area of gender.

7. During the period under review, the Secretary-General continued to report to the Commission on the Status of Women⁶¹⁸ and to the General Assembly on the improvement on the status of women in the United Nations system⁶¹⁹ and on the implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the special session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”.⁶²⁰ The Assembly continued to pass one resolution on the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat every year until the sixtieth session of the General Assembly.⁶²¹

⁶¹⁴ See, *Repertory, Supplement No. 8*, vol. I; and *Supplement No. 9*, vol. I, under this Article.

⁶¹⁵ GA resolutions 56/127; 57/180; 58/144; 59/164; 60/140; 61/145; 62/137; 63/159; and 64/141.

⁶¹⁶ GA resolution 60/1, para. 58.

⁶¹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶¹⁸ See E/CN.6/2000/2; E/CN.6/2002/7; E/CN.6/2004/3; E/CN.6/2006/2; and E/CN.6/2008/2.

⁶¹⁹ See A/55/399; A/56/472; A/57/447; A/58/374; A/59/357; A/61/318; and A/63/364.

⁶²⁰ See A/55/341; A/56/319; A/58/166; A/59/214; A/60/170; A/61/174; A/62/178; A/63/217; and A/64/218.

⁶²¹ See GA resolutions 55/69; 56/127; 57/180; 58/144; 59/164; and 60/170.

II. Analytical summary of practice

A. Participation of men and women in the United Nations Secretariat

1. Provisions concerning recruitment, appointment and promotion under conditions of equality

8. The participation of women in policy-level and decision-making positions was an issue under consideration during the period under review. Statistics revealed that the largest number of women was found at the P-3 level, whereas for men it was at the P-4 level.⁶²² While progress had been made, however, the representation of women at the senior levels remained low.⁶²³

9. Between 2004 and 2007, the representation of women in the Professional and higher categories in the entities of the United Nations system increased to 38.4 per cent.⁶²⁴ Women constituted 27 per cent of staff at the D-1 level and above as at 31 December 2007, compared to 23.7 per cent as at 31 December 2004. A small increase of 1.1 per cent was registered in the P-1 to P-5 categories, with women constituting 39.6 per cent of staff in December 2007 as compared to 38.5 per cent in December 2004. Even though the percentage of women at the P-1 and P-2 levels decreased, gender balance was maintained as representation had exceeded 50/50 at those levels.⁶²⁵

10. In general, special measures provided that vacancies in the Professional category and above should be filled by a female candidate if her qualifications met the requirements for the post and were substantially equal to those of competing male candidates.⁶²⁶ When the qualifications of a woman candidate matched the requirements and the department recommended a male candidate, it had to document in writing how the qualifications of the male candidate were superior to those of the female candidate. This policy also applied to temporary assignments to higher-level posts, i.e. at the Director level, and to mission service. Moreover, in the case of recruitment over the normal maximum desirable range for a given country, favourable consideration should be

given to qualified women candidates who had been recommended.⁶²⁷

11. Two policies under the current staff selection system, which came into effect for vacancy announcements issued as from 1 January 2007, affect women in particular. The first policy concerns “rostering”. It involves the placement of candidates who were deemed fully qualified for a post (placed on the recommended list) but were not selected on a roster comprising pre-approved candidates for future vacancies with similar functions and at the same level. The life of the roster was increased from one to three years for women.⁶²⁸ For example, during the period 1 July 2007 to 30 June 2008, 463 applicants were rostered, of which 38 per cent (179) were women, a percentage consistent with women’s representation in the other stages of the selection process.⁶²⁹

12. The second policy concerns the selection of male candidates in departments/offices which have not met the gender targets set out in their departmental action plans. According to the above administrative instruction, if the head of such a department/office proposes to select a male candidate when an equally qualified female candidate is available, the proposed selection decision must be justified to, and approved by, the Office of Human Resources Management.⁶³⁰

2. Provisions concerning equality in the work environment

13. During the period under review, the qualitative aspect of gender equality was also considered important. The Assembly repeatedly requested the Secretary-General to continue his work to create a gender-sensitive work environment supportive of the needs of his staff, including through the development of policies for flexible working time/place, family leave, child-care and elder care needs, as well as through training and the further development of a policy against sexual harassment.⁶³¹

⁶²² See [A/63/364](#), annex I.

⁶²³ Ibid.

⁶²⁴ Ibid., para. 5.

⁶²⁵ Ibid.

⁶²⁶ [ST/AI/2006/3](#), para. 9.2.

⁶²⁷ Ibid.

⁶²⁸ Ibid., para. 9.3.

⁶²⁹ Ibid.

⁶³⁰ Ibid., para. 9.2.

⁶³¹ GA resolutions 55/69; 56/127; 57/180; 58/144; 59/164; and 60/170. See also [ST/SGB/2005/20](#); and [ST/SGB/2008/5](#).

14. As part of the effort to foster a gender-sensitive work environment, the Secretariat introduced flexible working arrangements on 1 February 2003 following a six-month pilot.⁶³² Work/life issues were identified as central to the objective of assisting all staff better to reconcile work and family responsibilities and, more importantly, to address issues associated with recruitment and retention, especially with a view to the expected future workforce. An analysis of the slow causes of advancement of women in the United Nations system revealed a managerial culture that views the adoption of work/life policies as a barrier to productivity and efficiency and as incompatible both with career advancement and performance. Without a change in this culture, the implications in terms of recruitment, retention and the perception of good modern governance are negative and organizationally unhelpful. Based on the foregoing, four policies were made available for staff: (i) staggered working hours, (ii) compressed work schedules, (iii) scheduled break for external learning activities, and (iv) work away from the office (telecommuting).⁶³³

15. In addition, gender training was considered critical. Specific training on gender issues and gender mainstreaming were increasingly incorporated into Secretariat training and staff development programmes, including training tailored to the needs of the various departments/offices/regional commissions. Moreover, gender training was designed to help develop greater

awareness regarding gender balance and a gender-sensitive work environment. These initiatives were designed to change the organizational culture and to enhance its ability to address issues of gender-based discrimination and sexual harassment.

B. Participation of men and women in other United Nations organs

16. Most of the relevant documents continued to refer to the United Nations system⁶³⁴ and not only to the Secretariat. In fact, efforts to achieve gender balance were under way in many parts of the common system. With respect to the promotion of a supportive work environment, funds and programmes pursued the introduction of measures related, inter alia, to work/family issues⁶³⁵ and those organizations that had not already done so were encouraged to introduce appropriate procedures to combat sexual harassment.⁶³⁶

17. The General Assembly requested statistics on the number and percentage of women in all organizational units and at all levels throughout the United Nations system.⁶³⁷ Consequently, at the end of the period, the report of the Secretary-General also contained statistics on the gender distribution of staff at the Professional and higher levels in all organizations of the United Nations system.⁶³⁸

⁶³² See [ST/SGB/2003/4](#).

⁶³³ *Ibid.*

⁶³⁴ See [A/55/399](#); [A/56/472](#); [A/57/447](#); [A/58/374](#); [A/59/357](#); [A/61/318](#); and [A/63/364](#).

⁶³⁵ See [A/57/387](#) and [ST/SGB/2003/4](#).

⁶³⁶ See [E/2008/53](#), para. 45 (e).

⁶³⁷ GA resolution 62/137, para. 27.

⁶³⁸ See [A/63/364](#).

