



## Management of staff, recruitment and selection

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**Proposals of the Union Committee presented with a view to the revision of the collective agreement on the procedures for recruitment and management of staff that was concluded in October 2000 between the Union representatives and the Management.**

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### **The Issues**

The procedure for recruitment for vacant positions is the key to all policies for careers and stability of employment within the ILO, as in any public organisation. Staff members, at all grades and all places of employment, are fully aware of this – and their degree of confidence in the organisation, job satisfaction and effectiveness of the ILO's principles will depend to a large extent on the general acceptance of the conditions under which recruitment, promotions and transfers are made, and the degree of support that these honestly led procedures may receive from staff. It is a subject of great importance for the smooth operation of the whole office.

If the recruitment seems to be carried out in a semi-clandestine way, if individual hopes for progression do not materialise, if favouritism or arbitrary power seems to take place with regard to promotion, if too much abuse becomes obvious, then the atmosphere will not be good, and work will not get done, or it will be done grudgingly; on the other hand, if recruitment, transfers and promotions are entrusted to fully participative mechanisms, if everyone can hope to show what he or she is capable of, if the system combines general objectives and individualised monitoring of careers, if it produces favourable effects for both men and women, for Gs and for Ps, for field offices and for Head Office, then the administrative mechanism will be well oiled, less resentment will gather and more energy will be channelled in favour of good work.

### **Context**

A collective agreement on the procedures for recruitment and management of staff was concluded on October 6<sup>th</sup> 2000 between representatives of the Union and the Management. This agreement took effect on January 1<sup>st</sup> 2001 for a period of two years “from the date the procedure becomes operational”. The parties had agreed “to review the operation of this agreement at the end of that period”. The Joint Negotiation Committee therefore decided to schedule the revision of the agreement and the procedures into its work programme for 2004. This point also figured in the Union programme for the year 2004, as adopted in the General

Meeting of January 29<sup>th</sup> 2004. To prepare for the work of revision and practical evaluation, the Union Committee distributed a questionnaire to all its members at the end of January 2004 in order to gather their views and suggestions. It also led two information meetings at Head Office in November 2003 and February 2004. The team of union representatives involved in the selection process took charge of the request from the Union Committee for the drafting of a preliminary stance founded on the analysis of the situation and the proposals that could be improved.

## **A Little History**

Staff management within the organisation has evolved considerably in recent years. We have moved from a centralised system in the nineteen eighties, where a Selection Committee<sup>1</sup> composed of four members (two independent, one Management representative and one Union representative) decided on the way in which a vacancy was going to be filled (internal or external competition, transfer at the same grade or direct selection), to a system where the decision making was almost entirely decentralised with the unit managers, who were also to a large extent in charge of the procedure.

The Selection Committee, which made periodic reports to the Administrative Commission<sup>2</sup>, made recommendations to the Director-General, who had to respect the instructions founded on the stances of the Board of Directors, among other things in the matter of gender and geographical balance. When a competition was launched for a vacancy, the manager had little margin for manoeuvre within a panel named by the Selection Committee, composed of four members (two independent, one Management representative and one Union representative). This system was criticised for its slowness, and sometimes the constitution of panels who were unaware of the imperatives of high technical nature of some posts, which generated some complaints from managers. This system, not depending solely on the will of the manager of a unit, had the advantage of being more flexible in the matter of transfer and mobility of staff members and, as it was centralised, was based on a view of all the needs and human resources of the organisation.

The collective agreement on the management of staff, recruitment and selection signed between the Union and the Management in 2000 reduced the role of the Union and the Human Resources Department (HRD) to the management of the procedure, leaving responsibility for the selection, and to a certain extent the speed or slowness of the procedure, to the managers concerned. It was therefore a transfer of the power of selection to the manager, making him responsible with regard to his choices in the matter of the management of his team.

## **Advantages and Disadvantages of the Current System**

The HRD declares in its communications to the PFA that the current system is the fastest and that making the manager responsible for the choices in the matter of staff management has the main advantage that he/she assumes the consequences of the selection. As a result, the

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<sup>1</sup> The earlier system was based on selection by panels composed of employees figuring in a list that had been pre-established between the Management and the Union (independent panels).

<sup>2</sup> The Joint Negotiation Committee took over a large number of functions from the Administrative Commission, but not in the domain of staff management.

number of complaints from managers to the HRD, following selection of a member of staff, should have considerably reduced these last four years. Such a statistic is not, however, available, to our knowledge.

The system should guarantee us a higher level of technical knowledge than in the past.

#### *Consultation with members of the Union*

The consultation undertaken by the Union in the form of a questionnaire in fact informed us that some employees found the procedure transparent, and assessed the system of description of the tasks of the positions opened to competition as practical, as it complies with a matrix available to all on the Intranet. The option offered to applicants of knowing why they had not been selected is seen as an advantage.

The disadvantages noted, however, are many. The responses to the questionnaire revealed that many colleagues deplored the lack of supervision of the process: too much freedom left to managers, leading to risks of favouritism. Some competitions were seen as a ‘farce’, as the granting of the post had been decided in advance. Comments made by the Union concerning some inequalities of treatment were not taken into consideration by the management.

As staff management is no longer being undertaken in the organisation by a centralised system, it has become difficult for colleagues to transfer after having lost their position following a restructure or budgetary reduction – or even to take account, as a priority, of the legitimate desire for change expressed by some, keen to vary their professional experience. Everything depends on the will of managers jealous of their new primacy, and it could be said that the stipulations of clause 4.2.g of the Statute, establishing the list of priorities for recruitment, have become obsolete – notably for those requesting transfers and “rights to promotion”.

For the same reasons, the criterion of geographical variety is more difficult to assert, in the same way as respect for the gender balance or other criterion, like the granting of career prospects to internal applicants or the rejection of any form of discrimination. For example, it is proving impossible in the current system to promote the employment of disabled people. We have business with a ‘micro management’ of each unit.

Secondly, the establishment of technical panels by the managers is not always of good quality and we have highlighted highly unreliable reports in the matter of selection – as if the end (the decision to recruit such an applicant) – justifies the means. For example, negative comments concerning the capacity of applicants to communicate, although no interview had taken place, or the exclusion of some candidates from a ‘shortlist’ simply because there were too many applicants of the same nationality selected! The capacity of managers to manage the selection is very unequal and lacks professionalism in too many cases.

Finally, the agreement has not been applied for local positions in field offices. The difference in procedures for an ‘international’ post and a ‘local’ post has generated a certain confusion in the practice which has led, for example, to very divergent practices within a same region for the recruitment of skills for the decentralised Office, sometimes without caring about knowing whether this approach is compatible with the general principles of equity, transparency and union participation, of which the concrete translation in terms of rules of procedure has disappeared with the Selection Committee.

The current procedure remains vague with regard to the notion of the manager concerned, for example in the case of specialists based in field offices, having a dual allegiance, both to the technical department at Head Office and to the director of the field office.

The 2000 Collective Agreement does furthermore not specify the procedure to follow for the employment of experts for technical cooperation projects. This loophole, which dates from the early nineteen eighties, limits the options for experts to plan a career, and for the Office to test new talents identified under satisfactory conditions, at a time when the Office enters into a period of high turnover of executives. The absence of procedure and central monitoring for the recruitment of technical cooperation experts furthermore presents an obstacle to management of the mobility of staff members between technical cooperation and standard budget, between various places of employment or between the head office and the field. It also presents an obstacle to the mobility of local staff to other places of employment.

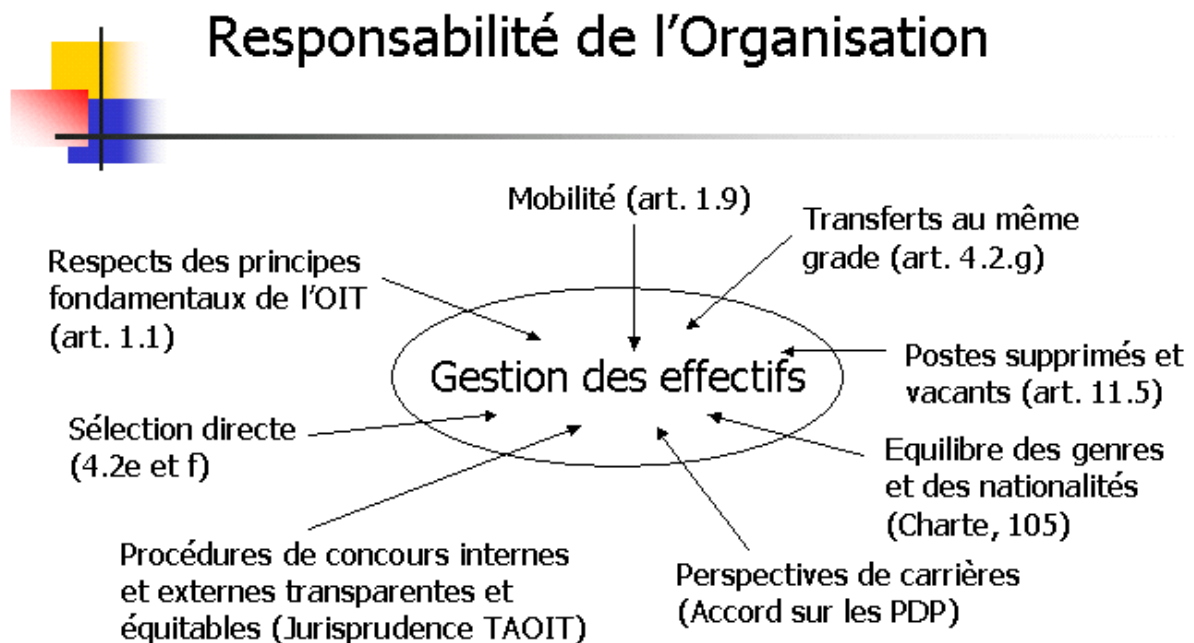
Furthermore, we have noted a certain perversion of the system of assessment centres which, originally planned to provide indications to staff members on the domains in which they could improve, has rapidly become a rather restrictive and sometimes incoherent selection tool. This approach was recently amended and this function should be rewritten. These tests are often criticised for their mono-cultural colour hardly appropriate for an international organisation.

Some shortfalls in the new system were presented very early by the HRD, which, at the first meeting of the new Joint Negotiation Committee, proposed to the Union the creation of a Human Resources Committee with which a link should be envisaged. This Committee only exists on paper and has not yet come into being.

Advantages	Disadvantages
Responsibility of the superior in the choice	More centralised management, difficulties with regard to staff management for the whole organisation, for mobility, balance of nationalities and sexes, etc.
Responsibility of the superior in the speed of the process	Panel reports sometimes unreliable, risk of nepotism and other forms of favouritism.
Guarantees concerning the technical aspect	Field offices not covered by the Agreement.
Better transparency of the system for applicants not selected.	The Agreement does not cover the question of employment of staff members for Technical Cooperation.
	Lack of clarity of the objectives of Assessment Centres

## Inventory of Needs

Our thinking to improve the system is the result of this history. We have noted that there are two levels of responsibilities and imperatives to respect. The first level concerns the responsibility of the organisation with regard to its principals, from which the framework and the staff management matrix have resulted for us all.

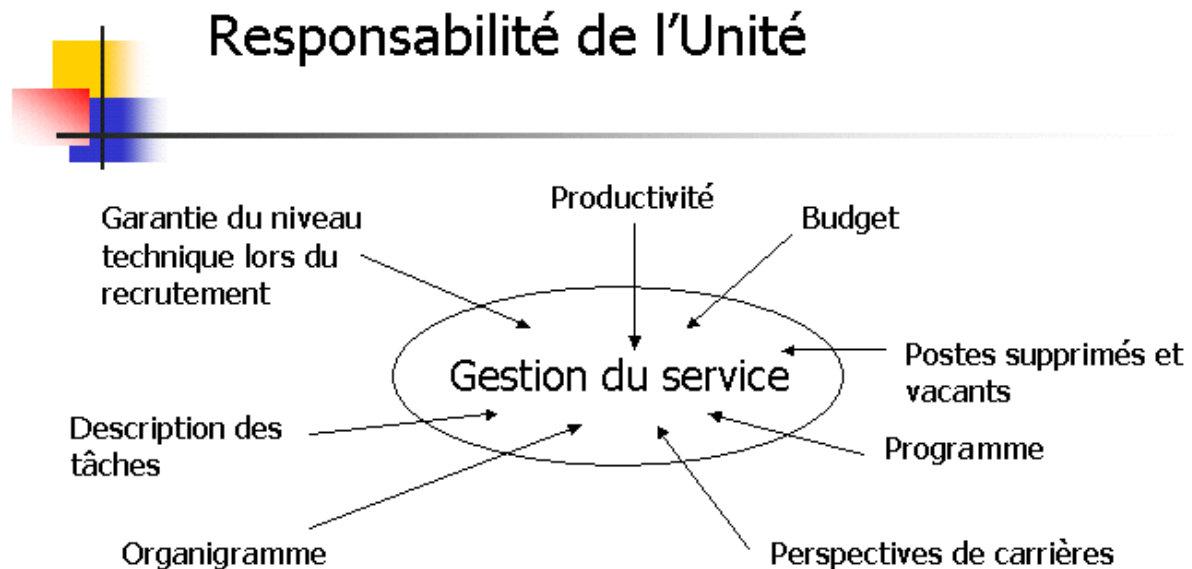


This responsibility must integrate the fundamental principles of the ILO, respect the imperatives for balance of genders and nationalities, mobility, transfers and global management of posts to be withdrawn and created. An overall view is necessary to effectively advise the Director-General in the matter.

It is essential that we also establish selection and recruitment procedures that define the coordination between the head office and the field offices, that these procedures are founded on the same principles for all whatever the place of employment, that they enable mobility not only for international staff members but also for local ones, that they enable a high level of flexibility between ILO technical cooperation projects, and, in short, that they do not compartmentalise our organisation internally, that it is opened to the outside, ensuring harmony and consistency in the management of human resources.

The second level of responsibility concerns the department itself and covers the principles of management of the vacant or withdrawn posts and career prospects of unit members, to which should be added the requirement for productivity, budget management, the definition of a flow chart responding to the objectives assigned by the programme and budget comprising specific definitions of everyone's tasks in relation to these same objectives.

It is necessary to be able to ensure that the unit also coordinates staff requirements with field offices in order to meet the requirements of our principals.



We note that some objectives are common to both levels and could consider, for example, that the question of balance of gender is the responsibility of all staff members, whatever their grade. However, the practice these last few years has demonstrated to us that the imperative of unit productivity supplants all others, sometimes even to the detriment of productivity of the organisation as a whole.

It is therefore necessary to find a system which ensure consideration of the technical criteria necessary to the smooth operation of a unit, i.e. at the end of the day, necessary to our needs, the generic imperatives of the organisation, and the legitimate aspirations of staff members to interesting career prospects and satisfactory working conditions.

### Proposals of the Union Committee

We begin with the general aspect of the procedure, i.e. what we have defined as being the first level of reflection.

#### *Staff Management Committee*

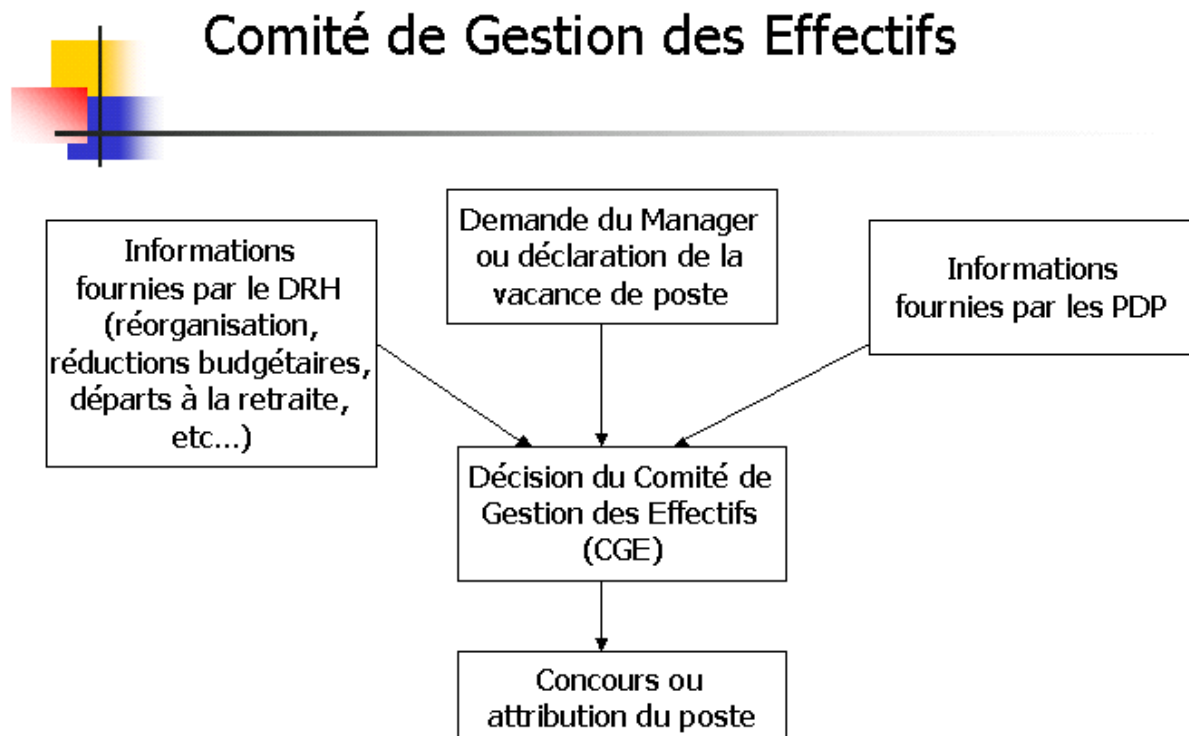
We propose to establish a Staff Management Committee (SMC) composed of a HRD representative and one from the Union, as well as two independent members nominated jointly, if possible from grade D1 or above in order to ensure the competition of employees well acquainted with the problems of team management. This Committee would be informed about **vacant or withdrawn posts**, which would force us into **long-term management of the movements of staff according to planned restructurings or budgetary reductions**. It would be aware of “staffing reviews” and predictions for restructuring affecting employment. This authority would guarantee respect for the **principles of the Organisation, geographical and gender balance, and transparent and equitable competition procedures**. Upon

notification of a vacancy, the HRD would be able to verify in advance whether the job description corresponded to the competencies of a staff member whose post was or risks being withdrawn, or who had expressed the desire to benefit from a **transfer at the same grade**, and thus manage these issues in advance, rather than through the competition. Our HRD colleagues recommend that at the same time we consult the data provided by the **Staff Development Plans (SDP)** in order to ensure that this transfer would not contradict other similar requests, in which case a competition would be opened.

This Committee would also process individual requests, such as demands for **direct choice**, those which fall within the framework of clause 4.2 of the personnel statute, personal promotions, requests for reductions in probationary periods or the young professionals programme. It would also have to process **special requests for post adjustment (SPA)**.

An **internal or internal/external competition**, according to needs, may be decided on at the same time as the approval of the job description. The Staff Management Committee may also decide to launch appeals for interest internally, before formally opening a competition procedure.

This Committee should ensure **coordination with the Offices of each region** in order that specific needs are taken into account. The staff member in charge of the human resources for the region should inform the SMC of requests from sub-regional offices. It is essential that this structure is in constant contact with each region and has the maximum information in order to enable mobility and open career prospects to all in relation to SDPs and the training of staff members.



A notice of competition would then be published, identical to those published according to the current procedure, indicating the criteria of nationality.

### ***Selection Panel (1<sup>st</sup> version)***

Under the presidency of the manager concerned, a panel composed of three members would be designated for the purposes of assessing the applications for each post. These three independent members would be nominated on the basis of their technical knowledge in the domain concerned. The HRD and the Union would jointly draw up lists of staff members able to be called upon to work in a technical panel for each family of employment as defined in the current matrix. This panel would operate according to the criteria established by the selection committee panels of the eighties. It would decide on the need for written examinations or interviews and would present its recommendation in the form of a report signed by all its members, sent to the Director-General for final decision and, for information, to the Staff Management Committee.

### ***Selection Panel (2<sup>nd</sup> version close to that existing before 2000)***

Under the presidency of the manager concerned, a panel composed of three members would be designated for the purposes of assessing the applications for each post. The manager would be then assisted in this work by a representative of the HRD, a Union representative, and an independent member nominated jointly by the three others on the basis of their technical knowledge in the domain concerned. The HRD and the Union would jointly draw up lists of staff members able to be called upon to work in a technical panel for each family of employment as defined in the current matrix. This panel would operate according to the criteria established by the selection committee panels of the eighties. It would decide on the need for written examinations or interviews and would present its recommendation in the form of a report sent to the Director-General for final decision.

### ***Assessment Centres***

The assessment centres would only be used as part of this procedure for the recruitment of new staff members. These centres would base themselves with the SDPs rather than with staff management, because they demonstrate the strong and weak points of staff members in connection with a career project within the organisation. They cannot in any way penalise a career if, from a technical point of view, the person is suitable. They should ensure that they are 'cleaned' of their mono-cultural image. Secondly, the assessment of the staff member, once the training period is completed, is carried out as part of its functions and also gives a picture of everyone's technical competencies. The fact of having "succeeded" at the assessment centre of a superior level entitles the staff member to promotion in the sense of clause 4.2.g of the Personnel Statute.

### ***Technical Cooperation***

The technical cooperation programmes are a strength of the organisation. Mobility between technical cooperation and standard budget should be established for staff members. Recruitment procedures that enable such mobility should be established. Experts who have worked on projects for the ILO for more than five years are a strength for the organisation solely due to the fact that their contract has been renewed over this period. Experts should be able to apply for standard budget posts, exempted from the assessment centre and the nationality criterion. We have an example of an employee, who has worked at head office for 11 years, who had the criteria of nationality imposed upon him for the competition to which he applied. After 11 years having to apply via an assessment centre is ridiculous. We would

therefore need to remedy this type of aberration. Direct choice to work on technical cooperation projects would remain the rule for contracts with an expected initial duration of less than a year.

### ***Young Professionals Programme***

The concept of this programme is to enable young University graduates aged under 30 from under-represented countries to enter in the organisation with the aim of creating a career. The Union supports this approach and the SMC has a duty to establish each year a quota of around a dozen posts reserved for this programme. This programme should be based on a forecast of the gender balance in the organisation. This programme could compensate for the absence of women in some P posts in the future. The Staff Management Committee should be able to participate on the selection of the young professionals.

### ***Timescales***

To each stage of the process (including for the assessment centres) either the SMC or the selection panel must have in mind that any vacancy is not only a loss of productivity for the organisation but also a generator of all types of frustrations for the applicants for the post in question. Because of this, the new procedure should specify the reasonable timescales to be respected for each stage, in order that the post is filled quickly.

### ***Feedback to applicants***

This measure of the 2000 agreement should be retained, while stipulating the role of the 'responsible chief'. The Union proposes that internal applicants can ask the president of the panel, i.e. the responsible chief, for the reasons for which they were not selected. The president could also copy to the requesting applicant the part of the report leading to the decision of the panel. A reference to the procedure for the settlement of disputes would be a logical follow-up in the event of a complaint with regard to the granting of a post. It should therefore allow for the possibility of recourse to the Joint Appeals Advisory Commission (JAAC). External applicants should also have the option of knowing the result and receiving feedback, even if they were not selected.

### ***Classification***

Although there is nothing to forbid it, the practice of classification of applicants seems to have been abandoned with the 2000 procedure. This practice had the advantage of avoiding opening a competition for a similar post if an applicant, although not the best, had been judged to be capable of doing the work. This also avoided having to restart the procedure upon withdrawal of the best-placed applicant. We therefore recommend submitting to the Director-General, when possible, a classification of applicants instead of only their name.

### ***Reports to the Director-General***

It would be appropriate to maintain, as is the case in the current procedure, that a copy of the report to the Director-General is sent to the Union. The involvement of Union representatives throughout the procedure reduces delays, because their participation avoids the procedure verification stage and the pointless comings and goings between this authority, the HRD and the manager concerned.

## **Connected Measures**

Staff management cannot be limited to the procedures of recruitment and selection. It is important, upon examination of these aspects to which the collective agreement of reference relates, to keep in mind other connected policies exercising a direct or indirect influence on decisions made in the matter of filling posts.

It is therefore important, during the procedure of revision of the collective agreement, and, later, in the implementation of the procedures which are adopted, to make sure that the connected measures are integrated into the system, while respecting the fundamental principles of transparency, objectivity and equality of chances that must prevail in the matter.

Among the connected measures that should be the object of particular attention in the revision of the mechanisms of recruitment and selection, are:

- The policy for promotion of women;
- The policy for enlargement of the geographical base of recruitment;
- The policy for younger management staff;
- Human management of internal reorganisations;
- Recognition of the quality of the international staff member in all categories and at all places of employment;
- Recognition of “entitlement to promotion”, notably through appropriate mechanisms for assessment of work and assessment of competencies;
- Recognition of a “right to training” and career progression, notably by the generalisation of plans for staff development;
- Implementation of an effective mobility policy and rotation policy between Head Office and the field;
- Combating casual employment and the misuse of procedures;
- Implementation of an employment policy for disabled persons;
- The practical application of measures for termination of service by mutual consent;
- Recognition of the value for the ILO of experience acquired outside of the ILO in the form of secondment or military service;
- Planning of human resources and transparency with regard to developments and corresponding organisational plans.

It will be very important, for the credibility of mechanisms to be implemented in the matter of recruitment and selection, to be able to guarantee that the corresponding procedures remain compatible with the pursuit of other objectives of the Office in the matter of management of human resources. This may only be obtained if, at the beginning of discussions, all connected issues reiterated above are explicitly taken into account by the parties to negotiation, which will necessitate a wide and ongoing consultation between specialists of the different domains, on the side of both the Management and the Union.