
Intervention of Prof Rajiva Wijesinha, Secretary, DM&HR in discussion of the Report of the JIU

Friday, 18 September 2009

Last Updated Friday, 18 September 2009

Intervention of Prof Rajiva Wijesinha, Secretary to the Ministry of Disaster Management and Human Rights in discussion of the Report of the Joint Inspection Unit Sri Lanka welcomes the Report of the Joint Inspection Unit on the requested follow up to the management review of the Office of the High Commissioner. The Report makes it clear that follow up has in fact been minimal. Recalling that the Review took place in 2003, one is reminded of Yeats's Wild Swans at Coole, sailing complacently in their shining white plumage across yet another lake. This Council needs therefore to work swiftly and purposefully if another generation is not to see the same swans twenty years later.

The Report, Mr President, indicates a mindset that concentrates on the problems of the influential few, at the expense of the more pressing concerns of the rest of the world. Though the description of the composition of staff begins with a table of geographical distribution, this is for all staff Conversely the table for gender balance is broken down by levels too, and the Review highlights imbalance in both senses it claims, at particular levels. It is not clear what is meant by both senses, but perhaps comfort is taken in the fact that the imbalances balance out as it were. This is not the case with regard to geographical distribution, with regard to which concern seems to be lacking. cursory calculation however reveals that that wonderful category called Western Europe and other enjoys 66% of P-5 staff, 63% of P-4, 55% of P-3 and 50% of P-2. It is not clear therefore why the Report declares that 'the Inspector realized that the issue of geographic distribution of Professional staff does not warrant the attention it receives'. So too there is no comment about the fact that the number of staff in the best beloved category went up by 18 in 2008 and, though the percentage is down, clearly no account was taken of the suggestion regarding the introduction of a temporary maximum level on such recruitment. More worryingly, the Report seems to justify what might be termed a self-perpetuating cartel, in addressing concerns as to the mobility and career development of those in service. Even more seriously the claims of those who are funded by the elite for continuing employment seem to be promoted in the Report, which suggests that the original recommendations will soon be superseded by partisan considerations. Finally Mr President, given that this Council should encourage diversity, there is also a case for providing statistics about the provenance of new entrants. A disturbing trend in recent years has been the symbiotic relationship between UN staff, who should be serving member states, and non-governmental organizations, some of which continue to shroud the origins of their finances and their outlay in mystery. Given the need to ensure improvements through cooperation with governments, there is surely a case too for ensuring greater recruitment from those who have worked in fields where public accountability is the norm. Sri Lanka hopes therefore that the next Report will present its statistics more consistently and indicate more forceful steps to ensure that there will be progress on previous recommendations, rather than a catalogue of reasons as to why movement is so painfully slow. 18 September 2009