

## **U.N.'s Dollar-a-Year Jobs Under Critical Scrutiny**

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The 132-member Group of 77, the largest single coalition of developing nations, is challenging the longstanding prerogative of successive U.N. secretaries-general to appoint “special envoys” whose services are deemed gratis – and who are on nominal “one-dollar-a-year” employment contracts.

The appointment of these envoys is outside the traditional guidelines laid down, or supervised by, the U.N.'s Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ), the Administrative and Budgetary Committee (also known as the Fifth Committee) and the 193-member General Assembly, the U.N.'s highest policy making body.

Over the years, there have been scores of special envoys, including former U.S. president Bill Clinton who oversees Haiti; Terje Rod-Larsen, a Norwegian diplomat who was the U.N. special coordinator for the Middle East peace process and now oversees Lebanon; and Jeffrey Sachs, a professor at Columbia University who is the Secretary-General's Special Adviser on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

While their primary incomes come from other positions they hold outside the United Nations, they are on a nominal dollar-a-year salary, but are entitled to lavish perks and benefits, including travel and hotel accommodation while on their assignments.

The ACABQ was told the appointments “did not entail the establishment of posts, and that extra-budgetary funds had been used to meet the costs associated” with their assignments.

But there has been little or no transparency either on the guidelines for the appointments or expenses incurred by the special envoys.

Speaking on condition of anonymity, a G77 source told IPS that all U.N. appointments are subject to rules and regulations, including guidelines

relating to equitable geographical distribution, gender balance and highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity. But, on the face of it, none of these apply to special envoys, he said.

These envoys are mostly at senior levels in the U.N. totem pole – ranking either as directors (D-1 and D-2), assistant secretaries-general (ASGs) or under secretaries-general (USGs).

Last week the Fifth Committee, on the initiative of the G77 and China, finalised a draft resolution which “expresses concern at the lack of oversight of the recruitment of individuals at the D-1 level and above on \$1-a-year contracts.”

The resolution stresses that “\$1-a-year contracts should only be granted under exceptional circumstances, and be limited to high-level appointments.”

And most importantly, it requests Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to prepare, for the first time, “guidelines regarding the use of these contracts and to report thereon to the General Assembly at the main part of the 69th session,” beginning September 2014.

The resolution, which is expected to be adopted by the General Assembly next week, warns that “no \$1-a-year contracts shall be granted until the aforementioned guidelines have been considered by the General Assembly.”

Asked for an official response, U.N. spokesperson Farhan Haq told IPS, “The General Assembly, in its draft resolution on human resources [A/C.5/67/L.29], stressed that one-dollar-a-year contracts should only be granted under exceptional circumstances and be limited to high-level appointments, which is the current practice.”

He said the Assembly also requested the secretary-general to prepare guidelines regarding the use of these contracts similarly to what was established for ‘When Actually Employed’ appointments.

“The issuance of guidelines for dollar-a-year contracts will ensure more consistent management of such appointments,” he added.

Lastly, he pointed out, the General Assembly requested the secretary-general to inform the ACABQ of the issuance of dollar-a-year contracts, as well as the establishment of certain categories of posts and positions such as “when actually employed”.

“This request has no impact on the authority of the secretary-general to issue such contracts or establish such posts,” Haq said.

And the secretary-general is not required to seek ACABQ’s endorsement, but simply to make them aware of actions he has taken in this regard, he added.

Meanwhile, the resolution also “reiterates its concern over the increase in the use of consultants, especially in the core activities of the Organisation.” The secretary-general has been told that the use of consultants “should be governed by the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly”, including the need for potential candidates to be drawn from the widest possible geographical basis, and requests him “to make the greatest possible use of in-house capacity.”

During the 2010-2011 biennium, a total of 267 consultancy/ individual contractor contracts had been awarded to former staff members whose last recorded grade was at the level of USG, ASG, D-2 or D-1, according to the ACABQ report released last week.