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UNITED NATIONS

Additional Efforts Needed to Increase U.S. Employment at UN Agencies





Highlights of [GAO-06-988](#), a report to congressional requesters

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Why GAO Did This Study

The U.S. Congress continues to be concerned about the underrepresentation of U.S. professionals in some UN organizations and that insufficient progress has been made to improve U.S. representation. In 2001, GAO reported that several UN agencies fell short of their targets for U.S. representation and had not developed strategies to employ more Americans. This report reviews (1) U.S. representation status and employment trends at five UN agencies, (2) factors affecting these agencies' ability to meet employment targets, and (3) the U.S. Department of State's (State) efforts to improve U.S. representation and additional steps that can be taken. We reviewed five UN agencies that together comprise about 50 percent of total UN organizations' professional staff.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that the Secretary of State provide more UN employment information on State Web sites; expand recruiting to reach qualified Americans; and evaluate the costs and benefits of maintaining a roster of qualified U.S. candidates for high priority positions, and of funding entry-level professional staff where Americans are underrepresented. In commenting on a draft of this report, State said it concurred with GAO's recommendations.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-06-988.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Thomas Melito at (202) 512-9601 or melitot@gao.gov.

What GAO Found

The United States is underrepresented at three of the five United Nations (UN) agencies we reviewed, and increased hiring of U.S. citizens is needed to meet employment targets. The three agencies where the United States is underrepresented are the International Atomic Energy Agency; UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization; and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees. U.S. citizens are equitably represented at the UN Secretariat, though close to the lower end of its target range. The UN Development Program has not established a target for U.S. representation, although U.S. citizens fill about 11 percent of its professional positions. Given projected staff levels, retirements, and separations, IAEA, UNESCO, and UNHCR would need to increase hiring of Americans to meet their minimum targets for U.S. representation in 2010.

While the five UN agencies face some common barriers to recruiting and retaining professional staff, including Americans, they also face their own distinct challenges. Most of these barriers and challenges are outside of the U.S. government's control. The common barriers include nontransparent human resource practices, limited external hiring, lengthy hiring processes, comparatively low or unclear compensation, required mobility, and limited U.S. government support. UN agencies also face distinct challenges. For example, at the Secretariat, candidates serving in professional UN positions funded by their governments are more likely to be hired than those who take the entry-level exam; however, the United States has not funded such positions. Also, IAEA has difficulty recruiting U.S. employees because the number of U.S. nuclear specialists is decreasing.

Since 2001, State has increased its efforts to achieve equitable U.S. representation at UN agencies, and additional options exist. State has targeted efforts to recruit U.S. candidates for senior and policymaking UN positions, and although it is difficult to link State's efforts to UN hiring decisions, U.S. representation in these positions has improved or displayed no trend in the five UN agencies. U.S. representation in entry-level positions, however, has declined or did not reflect a trend in four of the five UN agencies despite State's increased efforts. Additional steps include maintaining a roster of qualified U.S. candidates, expanding marketing and outreach activities, increasing UN employment information on U.S. agency Web sites, and assessing the costs and benefits of sponsoring entry-level employees at UN agencies.

Estimated Number of U.S. Citizens to be Hired to Meet Geographic Targets			
UN agency	Average number of total staff hired into geographic positions each year, 2001-2005	Average number of U.S. citizens hired into geographic positions each year, 2001-2005	Minimum average number of U.S. citizens to be hired each year to reach geographic target in 2010
IAEA	77	6	16
UNESCO	55	4.5	6
UNHCR	148	10	25

Source: GAO analysis of Secretariat, IAEA, and UNESCO hiring data.

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Abbreviations

ALD	assignment of limited duration
APSIA	Association of Professional Schools of International Affairs
CFE	cost free expert
DPKO	United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations
FTA	fixed-term temporary assistance
FTE	fixed-term extra-budgetary
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
IO	Department of State Bureau of International Organization Affairs
JPO	Junior Professional Officer
MST	monthly short term
NCRE	National Competitive Recruitment Exam
PRM	Department of State Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

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United States Government Accountability Office
Washington, DC 20548

September 6, 2006

Congressional Requesters:

The U.S. Congress continues to be concerned about the underrepresentation of American professionals employed by some United Nations (UN) organizations and that insufficient progress has been made to improve U.S. representation. In 2001, we reported¹ that several UN organizations continued to fall short of their own targets for American representation² and had not developed action plans or strategies for achieving equitable U.S. representation within a specified time frame. In addition, the U.S. Department of State (State) has annually reported to Congress that Americans have been underrepresented at a number of UN organizations.³ The equitable representation of Americans at UN organizations is a priority to Congress in part because the United States is the largest financial contributor to most of these organizations. Moreover, according to State, Americans bring desirable skills, values, and experience that can have a significant impact on UN organizations' operational effectiveness.

To address these concerns, this report reviews (1) U.S. representation status and employment trends at five UN organizations, (2) factors affecting these organizations' ability to meet U.S. representation targets, and (3) State's current efforts to improve U.S. representation and additional steps that can be taken.

To determine the United States' representation status, identify the trends in the number of professional positions held by U. S. citizens, and calculate hiring projections, we analyzed employment data for 2001 through 2005 that we obtained from five UN organizations: the United

¹GAO, *United Nations: Targeted Strategies Could Help Boost U.S. Representation*, GAO-01-839 (Washington, D.C.: July 27, 2001).

²The Secretariat and several UN organizations have quantitative formulas that establish targets for equitable geographical representation for designated professional and senior-level positions. Other agencies have negotiated informal targets with the United States. Some agencies, however, do not maintain any targets at all.

³In 1991, Congress enacted legislation requiring the Secretary of State to report annually on whether UN organizations with geographic targets were meeting their targets for Americans and whether these organizations were making good faith efforts to hire more Americans.

Nations Secretariat⁴ and the United Nations Development Program⁵ (UNDP) in New York; the International Atomic Energy Agency⁶ (IAEA) in Vienna; the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization⁷ (UNESCO) in Paris; and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees⁸ (UNHCR) in Geneva. Technically, the IAEA is an independent international organization that has a relationship agreement with the UN. For the purposes of this report, we refer to the IAEA as a UN agency, or organization. Throughout this report, UNDP data includes three UNDP suborganizations: UN Development Fund for Women, UN Volunteers, and UN Capital Development Fund. Two organizations have formal geographic targets: the Secretariat and UNESCO. The remaining three UN organizations do not. IAEA informally calculates a member state to be underrepresented if its geographic representation is less than half of its percent contribution to the budget. Using this method, we calculated a U.S. target. UNHCR and the United States have agreed to an informal target. UNDP has no targets. We determined the data were sufficiently reliable for the purposes of this review. We also met with human resources officials from these five organizations to discuss various aspects of the data. We selected these agencies because they represent a range of UN agencies with different funding mechanisms and methods for calculating geographic representation. These five agencies together comprise approximately 50 percent of total UN organizations' professional staff.⁹ To assess factors affecting these organizations' ability to meet the targets, we reviewed UN

⁴The United Nations was founded in 1945, and the UN Secretariat, headed by the Secretary-General, carries out the day-to-day work of the organization. According to the UN Charter, the four purposes of the organization are to maintain international peace and security; develop friendly relations among nations; cooperate in solving international problems and in promoting respect for human rights; and be a center for harmonizing the acts of nations.

⁵UNDP was formed in 1965 and is the UN's global development network. UNDP works with countries to develop solutions to global and national development challenges.

⁶IAEA was established in 1957, and works with its member states and other partners to promote safe, secure, and peaceful nuclear technologies. IAEA's mission focuses on safety and security, science and technology, and safeguards and verification.

⁷UNESCO was founded in 1945 with the purpose of contributing to peace and security by promoting nations' collaboration through education, science, and culture to further respect for justice, the rule of law, and human rights.

⁸UNHCR was established in 1950 with the mandate of leading and coordinating international efforts to protect refugees and resolve refugee problems. The organization's central purpose is to safeguard the rights and well-being of refugees.

⁹As of December 31, 2004.

agency documents and interviewed UN human resources officials, over 100 Americans employed at the five UN agencies, and U.S. officials. To assess the strategies used by State to improve U.S. representation, we reviewed State documents and interviewed State officials and representatives of U.S. agencies that participated in inter agency task force meetings on UN employment or that receive vacancy announcements. We conducted our work from July 2005 through July 2006 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Appendix I contains a more detailed description of our scope and methodology.

Results in Brief

The United States is underrepresented in three of the five UN agencies we reviewed, and increased hiring of U.S. citizens is needed to meet agreed-upon employment targets. Based on UN agencies' formal or informal targets for equitable geographic representation, U.S. citizens are underrepresented at IAEA, UNESCO, and UNHCR, and equitably represented at the UN Secretariat, though close to the lower end of its target range. UNDP has not established a target for U.S. representation, although U.S. citizens fill about 11 percent of the agency's professional positions. Given projected staff levels, retirements, and separations for 2006 to 2010, the Secretariat, IAEA, UNESCO, and UNHCR would need to hire more Americans than they have hired in recent years to meet their minimum targets for equitable U.S. representation in 2010.

While the UN agencies we reviewed face some common barriers to recruiting and retaining professional staff, including Americans, they also face distinct challenges. Most of these barriers and challenges are outside the U.S. government's control. Six barriers common to UN agencies we reviewed include nontransparent human resource practices; a limited number of positions open to external candidates; lengthy hiring processes; comparatively low or unclear compensation; required staff mobility and rotation policies; and limited U.S. government support during Americans' efforts to obtain, or be promoted at, a UN job. These barriers combine with distinct agency-specific factors to impede recruitment and retention. For example, candidates serving in professional positions funded by their member governments are more likely to be hired by the Secretariat than those who take the Secretariat's entry-level exam; however, the United States has not funded such positions at the Secretariat. IAEA has difficulty attracting U.S. employees because the pool of American nuclear specialists is decreasing. At UNESCO, U.S. representation is low, in part, because the United States was not a member for 19 years. When the United States withdrew its membership in 1984, Americans comprised 9.6 percent of UNESCO's professional staff; when it rejoined in 2003,

Americans comprised only 2.9 percent. UNHCR has difficulty retaining staff, particularly at the mid-career level, because it has more hardship duty stations than any other agency. Despite the agency's efforts to increase the hiring of Americans, attrition keeps overall U.S. representation below the agreed-to target. Finally, while common barriers are the leading factors affecting U.S. representation at UNDP, the agency is also seeking to increase the hiring of senior staff from southern (mostly developing) countries, which could limit employment opportunities for U.S. citizens.

Since 2001 the Department of State has increased its efforts to support the goal of achieving equitable U.S. representation at UN organizations, and additional options exist to target professional positions. State has targeted efforts to recruit American candidates for senior and policymaking UN positions and, although it is difficult to directly link State's efforts to UN hiring decisions, U.S. representation in senior and policymaking positions has either improved or did not reflect a trend in each of the five UN agencies we reviewed. State also has undertaken several efforts to improve overall U.S. representation, including adding staff to its UN employment office and increasing coordination with other U.S. agencies that work with UN organizations. For positions below the senior level, State focuses on "getting the word out" by, for example, disseminating information on UN vacancies through its Web site, attending career fairs and conferences, and other means. Despite these efforts, U.S. representation in entry-level positions has declined or did not display a trend in four of the five UN agencies we reviewed. Additional steps to target potential pools of candidates for professional positions include: maintaining a roster of qualified American candidates; expanding marketing and outreach activities; increasing UN employment information on U.S. agency Web sites; and conducting an assessment of the costs and benefits of sponsoring Junior Professional Officers (JPO), who are entry-level employees that are financially supported by their home government.

To improve U.S. efforts to increase the employment of Americans at UN agencies, we are making several recommendations. We recommend that the Secretary of State (1) provide more consistent and comprehensive information about UN employment on the State and U.S. mission Web sites and work with U.S. agencies to expand the UN employment information on their Web sites; (2) expand targeted recruiting and outreach to more strategically reach populations of Americans that may be qualified for and interested in entry- and mid-level UN positions; and (3) conduct an evaluation of the costs, benefits, and trade-offs of maintaining a roster of qualified candidates for professional and senior positions

determined to be a high priority for U.S. interests and an evaluation of funding JPOs, or other gratis personnel, where Americans are underrepresented or could become underrepresented.

In commenting on a draft of this report, State concurred with and agreed to implement all of our recommendations. We received technical comments from State, IAEA, UNESCO, UNHCR, and UNDP, which we have incorporated as appropriate.

Background

The United Nations is comprised of six principal bodies: the General Assembly, Security Council, Economic and Social Council, Trusteeship Council, International Court of Justice, and the Secretariat. The United Nations system also encompasses funds and programs, such as UNDP, and specialized agencies, such as UNESCO. These funds, programs, and specialized agencies have their own governing bodies and budgets, but follow the guidelines of the UN charter. Article 101 of the UN Charter calls for staff to be recruited on the basis of “the highest standards of efficiency, competence, and integrity” as well as from “as wide a geographical basis as possible.” Each UN agency also has its own personnel policies, procedures, and staff rules. The Secretariat and several specialized agencies have quantitative formulas that establish targets for equitable geographical representation in designated professional positions. Other agencies have negotiated informal targets with the United States, while some agencies do not have formal or informal targets.

Agencies with formal quantitative targets for equitable representation do not apply these targets to all professional positions. Instead, these organizations set aside positions that are subject to geographic representation from among the professional and senior positions performing core agency functions, funded from regular budget resources. Positions that are exempted from being counted geographically include linguist and peacekeeping positions, and those funded by extra-budgetary resources. In addition, UN agencies employ staff in short-term positions that also are not geographically counted. Nongeographic staff members include employees tied to specific projects (L-staff), employees in assignments of limited duration (ALD) contracted for 4 years or less, temporary employees contracted for less than 1 year, and gratis personnel, such as JPOs, who are funded by member states. In addition, these organizations utilize various nonstaff positions, such as contractors and consultants.

Of the five agencies we reviewed, three—the Secretariat, IAEA, and UNESCO—have designated positions subject to geographic distribution. The Secretariat and UNESCO have established formulas to determine member states’ targets for equitable representation, which consider three factors: membership status,¹⁰ financial contribution,¹¹ and population size.¹² IAEA informally calculates a member state to be underrepresented if its geographic representation is less than half of its percent contribution to the budget. Using this method, we calculated a U.S. target. UNHCR has not established a quantitative formula or positions subject to geographic representation, but has agreed to an informal target for equitable U.S. representation. UNDP generally follows the principle of equitable geographic representation, but has not adopted formal or informal targets.

The Department of State is the U.S. agency primarily responsible for leading U.S. efforts toward achieving equitable U.S. representation in UN organizations. In doing so, State cooperates with at least 17 federal agencies that have interests in specific UN organizations. A 1970 executive order assigns the Secretary of State responsibility for leading and coordinating the federal government’s efforts to increase and improve U.S. participation in international organizations through transfers and details for federal employees.¹³ The order further calls for each agency in the executive branch to cooperate “to the maximum extent feasible” to promote details and transfers through measures such as (1) notifying well-qualified agency employees of vacancies in international organizations and (2) providing international organizations with detailed assessments of the qualifications of employees being considered for specific positions. In addition, under legislation enacted in 1991,¹⁴ the Secretary of State is required to report to Congress on whether each international organization

¹⁰Membership status refers to the right of each member state to a number of positions. For example, in the UN Secretariat, a minimum of about 1 to 14 positions are assigned to each member state. This provision is especially important for countries with a relatively small population and small UN assessment, which could receive only one position if a minimum number of positions were not set.

¹¹Member state contributions are the common factor used by UN organizations to determine targets or ranges because the level of budgetary contribution is an inherent factor in a state’s membership in the organization.

¹²Population size is used to ensure that member states are represented in keeping with their respective demographic profiles.

¹³Exec. Order No. 11,552, 35 Fed. Reg. 13,569 (Aug. 24, 1970).

¹⁴22 U.S.C. 276c-4.

with a geographic distribution formula is making “good faith steps to increase the staffing of United States citizens and has met its geographic distribution formula.” State’s Bureau of International Organization Affairs is responsible for implementing these requirements.¹⁵ While State is responsible for promoting and seeking to increase U.S. representation in the UN, the UN entities themselves are ultimately responsible for hiring their employees and achieving equitable representation.

We previously reviewed U.S. representation in UN organizations and found that, between 1992 and 2001, Americans were not equitably represented in the UN system, given the agencies’ own targets.¹⁶ In addition, the UN agencies lacked long-range workforce planning strategies to improve the geographic distribution imbalance. We also reported that State’s efforts to improve U.S. representation in the UN system did not reflect its high priority status, particularly relative to other member countries. We recommended that the Secretary of State (1) develop a comprehensive strategy that specifies performance goals and time frames for achieving equitable representation of Americans in the UN System and include efforts to foster interagency coordination, (2) work with human resources directors of UN organizations to develop plans and strategies for achieving equitable geographic representation within specified time frames, and (3) provide copies of State’s annual report to Congress on UN progress to the heads of UN organizations for appropriate attention and action. State has subsequently implemented these recommendations, including adding a performance indicator on the UN’s employment of Americans to its performance and accountability documents.¹⁷ We also recommended that State develop guidelines defining its goal of obtaining an equitable share of senior-level and policy-making positions for U.S. citizens and that it use these guidelines to assess whether the United States is equitably represented in high-level positions in UN organizations. State did not agree with this final recommendation and has not implemented it.

¹⁵State also reports about UN organizations it deems to be of high interest to the United States.

¹⁶[GAO-01-839](#).

¹⁷State began reporting on this indicator in its Fiscal Year 2002 *Performance and Accountability Report*.

U.S. Is Underrepresented in Three of Five UN Agencies and Increased Hiring of Americans Is Necessary to Meet Employment Targets

U.S. citizens are underrepresented at three of the five UN agencies we reviewed: IAEA, UNESCO, and UNHCR. Given projected staff levels, retirements, and separations for 2006-2010, these agencies need to hire more Americans than they have in recent years to meet their minimum targets for equitable U.S. representation in 2010.

U.S. Citizens Are Underrepresented Relative to Targets at Three UN Agencies

Relative to UN agencies' formal or informal targets for equitable geographic representation, U.S. citizens are underrepresented at three of the five agencies we reviewed—IAEA, UNESCO, and UNHCR. U.S. citizens are equitably represented at the UN Secretariat, though at the lower end of its target range, while the fifth agency—UNDP—has not established a target for U.S. representation. U.S. citizens fill about 11 percent of UNDP's professional positions. Table 1 provides information on U.S. representation at the five UN agencies as of 2005.

Table 1: U.S. Representation at Five UN Agencies, 2005

UN agency	Percentage of total geographic positions targeted for U.S. citizens ^a	Percentage of geographic positions filled by U.S. citizens ^a	Percentage of nongeographic positions filled by U.S. citizens ^b
Secretariat	11.5%-15.6%	12.1%	9.5%
IAEA	12.9%	11.5%	17.1%
UNESCO	6.2%-10.2%	4.1%	1.9%
UNHCR	13%	8.0%	11.1%
UNDP	Not applicable	10.8%	12.6%

Source: GAO analysis of Secretariat, IAEA, UNESCO, UNHCR, and UNDP data.

Note: Geographic targets are an average of 2004 and 2005 data. All other percentages are based on 2005 data for all the agencies.

^aUNHCR and UNDP do not have geographic positions; however, UNHCR has agreed to an informal 13 percent target with the U.S. government. For these agencies, we calculated the percentage of regular professional positions filled by U.S. citizens, which includes staff under contracts of longer fixed term (100-series contracts in UNHCR and 100- and 200-series contracts in UNDP).

^bFor the Secretariat, IAEA, and UNESCO, nongeographic positions include regular professional positions not subject to geographic distribution, temporary positions, JPOs, and consultants and contractors. UNESCO was unable to provide nationality data for its 572 consultants and contractors, which comprise nearly two thirds of UNESCO's nongeographic staff; hence the U.S. percentage of nongeographic positions does not reflect U.S. citizen employment in this category. For UNHCR and UNDP, nongeographic positions are all other, nonregular professional staff, which includes temporary staff (limited fixed term at UNHCR and assignments of limited duration at UNDP), JPOs, and consultants and contractors. Data provided by the agencies did not differentiate between support and professional level positions for consultants and contractors.

Table 1 also shows that the percentage of U.S. citizens employed in nongeographic positions (or nonregular positions in the case of UNHCR and UNDP) is higher at IAEA, UNHCR, and UNDP and lower at the Secretariat and UNESCO compared to the percentage of geographic (or regular) positions held by U.S. citizens. The most notable difference is at the IAEA, where the percentage of U.S. citizens employed in nongeographic positions is considerably higher than the percentage employed in geographic positions due to the high percentage of temporary,¹⁸ JPO, and consultant and contractor positions held by Americans. (See app. II for details on the composition of Americans in geographic and nongeographic positions.)

As shown in table 2, U.S. citizen representation in geographic positions in “all grades” between 2001 and 2005 has been declining at UNHCR and displays no clear trend in “all grades” at the other four UN agencies.

Table 2: Trends in U.S. Representation at Five UN Agencies (covering geographic positions at the Secretariat, IAEA, and UNESCO and regular positions at UNHCR and UNDP)

UN agency	Trend from 2001-2005				
	U.S. equitably represented based on agreed-upon targets ^a	U.S. citizens in all professional grade levels	U.S. citizens in policy-making and senior-level positions ^b	U.S. citizens in entry-level positions ^c	U.S. citizens in mid-level positions ^d
Secretariat	Yes	No trend	No trend	No trend	No trend
IAEA	No	No trend	Increasing	Decreasing	No trend
UNESCO	No	No trend	No trend	Increasing	No trend
UNHCR	No	Decreasing	No trend	Decreasing	Decreasing
UNDP	Not applicable	No trend	Increasing	Decreasing	No trend

Source: GAO analysis of Secretariat, IAEA, UNESCO, UNHCR, and UNDP data.

¹⁸Temporary positions at IAEA include staff on the following contracts: fixed-term temporary assistance (FTA), fixed-term extra-budgetary (FTE), monthly short term (MST), and cost-free experts (CFE), the latter which are financed by member state governments.

Notes:

Trends in U.S. citizen representation refer to the number of U.S. citizens employed as a percentage of agency employment, in the respective grade, over the period 2001 to 2005. Increases or decreases are determined by decidedly positive or negative average changes over the period. For additional details on our methodology, see appendix I. See appendix III for graphic illustration of the trends presented in table 2.

For the Secretariat, IAEA, and UNESCO, the trend analysis is for U.S. citizens in geographic positions from 2001 to 2005. For UNHCR and UNDP, the trend analysis, also for 2001 to 2005, is for U.S. citizens in regular professional positions since these agencies do not have geographic positions. Regular professional positions for UNHCR and UNDP include staff under contracts of longer fixed-term (100-series contracts for UNHCR and 100-and 200-series contracts for UNDP).

^aThe three agencies with geographic targets are the Secretariat, IAEA, and UNESCO. UNHCR does not have geographic positions, although it has agreed to an informal target.

^bSenior-level positions represent UN position levels D1 and D2, roughly equivalent to U.S. government Senior Executive Service. Policy-making positions represent UN position levels of Deputy or Assistant Director General at IAEA and UNESCO and Under or Assistant Secretary General at the Secretariat, UNHCR, and UNDP.

^cRepresents UN position levels P1 to P3, roughly equivalent to U.S. government grade levels 9 to 12/13.

^dRepresents UN position levels P4 to P5, roughly equivalent to U.S. government grade levels 13 to 15.

U.S. representation in policymaking and senior-level positions increased at two agencies —IAEA and UNDP—and displayed no overall trend at the Secretariat, UNESCO and UNHCR over the full five years. At the Secretariat, although no trend is indicated, U.S. representation has been decreasing in policy-making and senior-level positions since 2002. At UNESCO, the data for 2001 to 2004 did not reflect a trend, but the overall percentage of Americans increased in 2005, reflecting increased recruiting efforts after the United States rejoined UNESCO in 2003.¹⁹ At UNHCR, the representation of U.S. citizens in these positions grew steadily from 2001 through 2004, but declined in 2005. Regarding entry-level positions, U.S. representation in these positions increased at UNESCO, decreased at IAEA, UNHCR and UNDP, and showed no trend at the Secretariat. (See app. III for more detailed information on the trends in geographic employment.)

¹⁹Between 2003 and 2005, UNESCO increased the number of U.S. nationals employed in geographic positions from 21 to 30 professionals, an increase of over 40 percent.

Increased Hiring of Americans Needed to Meet Several UN Agencies' Minimum Targets

We estimate that each of the four agencies with geographic targets—the Secretariat, IAEA, UNESCO, and UNHCR—would need to hire U.S. citizens in greater numbers than they have in recent years to achieve their minimum targets by 2010, given projected staff levels, retirements, and separations; otherwise, with the exception of UNESCO,²⁰ U.S. geographic representation will decline further. As shown in table 3, IAEA and UNHCR would need to more than double their current average hiring rate to achieve targets for U.S. representation. The Secretariat could continue to meet its minimum geographic target for U.S. citizens if it increased its annual hiring of U.S. citizens from 20 to 23. UNESCO could achieve its minimum geographic target by increasing its current hiring average of 4.5 Americans to 6 Americans. Although the fifth agency, UNDP, does not have a target, it would have to increase its annual hiring average of U.S. citizens from 17.5 to 26 in order to maintain its current ratio of U.S. regular professional staff to total agency regular professional staff.

Table 3: Estimated Numbers of U.S. Citizens to Be Hired to Meet Geographic and Other Targets for 2006 to 2010

UN agency	Average annual number of total staff hired into geographic positions each year, 2001-2005 ^a	Average number of U.S. citizens hired into geographic positions each year, 2001-2005 ^a	Percentage of total geographic positions targeted for U.S. citizens ^b	Minimum average number of U.S. citizens to be hired each year, 2006-2010, to reach geographic target in 2010	Resulting geographic representation in 2010 if agency follows 2001-2005 hiring average for U.S. citizens
Secretariat	170	20	11.5%-15.6%	23	10.9%
IAEA	77	6	12.9%	16	7.1%
UNESCO	55	4.5	6.2%-10.2%	6	5.1%
UNHCR ^c	148	10	13%	25	7.9%
UNDP	153	17.5	Not applicable	26	8.6%

Source: GAO analysis of Secretariat, IAEA, UNESCO, UNHCR, and UNDP data.

^aFor UNHCR and UNDP, which do not have geographic positions, we calculated the average number of regular professional U.S. staff hired each year, (2001 to 2005), including separations and retirements. Regular professional includes staff under contracts of longer fixed term (100-series contracts in UNHCR and 100- and 200-series contracts in UNDP).

^bFor UNHCR, we used the informal target of 13 percent for U.S. citizens, agreed upon by UNHCR and the U.S. government. For UNDP, we used the target of 11.1 percent, the average U.S. employment from 2001 through 2005.

²⁰If UNESCO continues to hire at the same rate that it has in the past, U.S. representation would increase from its current level of 4.1 percent to 5.1 percent in 2010.

²⁰The minimum average number of U.S. citizens to be hired each year, 25, is based on a zero percent rate of growth of staff, which UNHCR officials indicated was appropriate for 2006 to 2010. From 2001 to 2005, UNHCR's staff grew at an average annual rate of 6 percent. Under this assumption, the minimum number of U.S. citizens to be hired annually would increase to 40.

If current hiring levels are continued through 2010, two of the five agencies—IAEA and UNHCR—would fall substantially below their minimum targets. In only one agency—UNESCO—would the percentage of geographic positions filled by U.S. citizens increase under current hiring levels due in part, to the recent increased hiring of U.S. citizens. (See app. I for a discussion of our hiring projection methodology.)²¹

While Common Barriers to Increasing U.S. Representation Exist, UN Agencies Also Face Distinct Employment Challenges

A combination of barriers, including some common factors as well as agency-specific factors, adversely affects recruitment and retention of professional staff, including Americans, at each of the five UN agencies. Barriers common to most UN agencies we reviewed include nontransparent human resource practices, a limited number of positions open to external candidates, lengthy hiring processes, comparatively low or unclear compensation, required mobility and rotation, and limited U.S. government support. These barriers combine with distinct agency-specific factors to impede recruitment and retention. For example, candidates serving in professional UN positions funded by their member governments are more likely to be hired by the Secretariat than those who take the Secretariat's entry-level exam; however, the United States has not funded such positions at the Secretariat. IAEA has difficulty attracting U.S. employees because the pool of American nuclear specialists is decreasing. At UNESCO, U.S. representation is below the negotiated target, in part, because the United States was not a member for 19 years. UNHCR has difficulty retaining staff, particularly at the mid-career level, because it has more hardship duty stations than any other agency. UNDP faces several barriers that are also present at other UN agencies, such as limited U.S. government support, and is also seeking to increase the hiring of senior staff from developing countries.

²¹We performed sensitivity analyses by varying the staff growth and separation rates. We found that minor changes did not produce major differences in the results.

Common Barriers
Adversely Affect U.S.
Representation at Several
UN Agencies

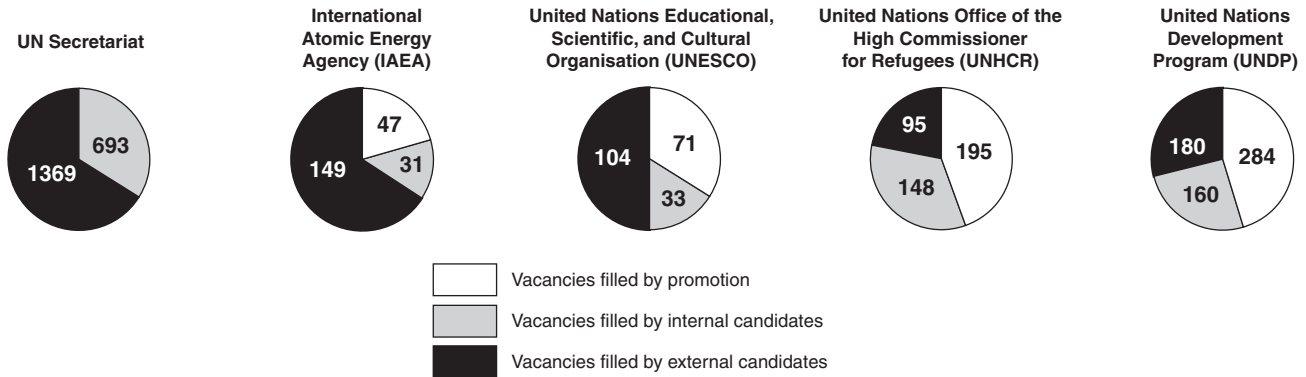
We identified six barriers that commonly affect U.S. representation in the UN agencies we reviewed, although often to differing degrees.

- *Nontransparent Human Resource Practices:* According to Americans employed at UN organizations, a key barrier to American representation across the five UN agencies we reviewed was the lack of transparent human resource management practices. For example, some UN managers circumvent the competitive hiring process by employing individuals on short-term contracts—positions that are not vetted through the regular, competitive process—for long-term needs. In addition, some Americans at each of the agencies, except IAEA, said that “cronyism” exists and that certain individuals only hire their fellow nationals. Others said that the perception of U.S. overrepresentation²² hinders managers from hiring or promoting U.S. citizens regardless of their skills. In response, UN human resource officials expressed concern about U.S. employees’ perception of “cronyism” and lack of transparent practices. UN human resource officials said that hiring processes include rigorous reviews involving the personnel division; managers; and appointment, promotion and review boards. However, the UN Secretary-General also acknowledged in a report to the General Assembly that management systems, including human resources, lacked transparency.²³
- *Limited External Opportunities:* Recruiting U.S. candidates is difficult because agencies offer a limited number of posts to external candidates. Each of the organizations we reviewed, except IAEA, advertises professional, or P-level, vacancies to current employees before advertising them externally in order to provide career paths for their staff and to motivate staff. Furthermore, the definition of external candidates used at the Secretariat, IAEA, UNESCO, and UNHCR is quite broad and may include current staff with temporary appointments, JPOs, former staff, or staff in other agencies in the UN Common System. In reviewing hiring data, we found that three of the five agencies—UNESCO, UNHCR and UNDP—filled 50 percent or more of new appointments by promotions or other internal candidates rather than by hiring external candidates. (See fig. 1. For definitions of promotion, internal hire, and external hire, see app. IV.)

²²Americans comprised the largest number of geographic professionals at every agency we reviewed, except UNESCO, where they ranked fourth.

²³UN General Assembly, 60th Session. *Investing in the United Nations for a Stronger Organization Worldwide: Report of the Secretary-General (A/60/692)*. 7 March 2006.

Figure 1: Number of Vacancies Filled by Promotions, Internal Candidates, and External Candidates, 2004 and 2005 Data Combined



Source: GAO analysis of UN agencies' data.

Note: UNHCR figure based on 2003 to 2004 data.

IAEA fills a large percentage of its positions with external candidates because, in addition to not giving internal candidates hiring preference, the agency employs the majority of its staff members for 7 years or less. Although the data indicate that the Secretariat hires a significant percentage of external candidates, the Secretariat's definition of "external candidates," as describe above, includes staff on temporary contracts and individuals who have previous experience working at the agency.

- Lengthy Hiring Process:* For positions that are advertised externally, the agencies' lengthy hiring processes can deter candidates from accepting UN employment. For example, a report from the Secretary General²⁴ states that the average hiring process is too slow, taking 174 days from the time a vacancy announcement is issued to the time a candidate is selected, causing some qualified applicants to accept jobs elsewhere. One American at UNESCO noted that his hiring process took about 9 months, while another said it took about 1 year. At UNHCR, even its "fast-track" system used to staff emergency situations takes five months, on average. Many Americans that we interviewed concurred with the report's sentiment, saying that it is difficult to plan a job move when there is a long delay between submitting an application and receiving an offer. In March 2006, the Secretary General proposed cutting the average recruitment time in half.

²⁴UN General Assembly, 60th Session (A/60/692).

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- *Comparatively Low or Unclear Compensation:* Comparatively low salaries and benefits that were not clearly explained were among the most frequently mentioned deterrents to UN employment for Americans. American employees we interviewed noted that UN salaries, particularly for senior and technical posts, are not comparable with U.S. government and private sector employment. The International Civil Service Commission²⁵ also reported that remuneration across the UN common system²⁶ is not competitive in the international labor market.²⁷ When candidates consider current UN salaries in tandem with UN employee benefits, such as possible reimbursement for U.S. taxes and school tuition allowances through college, UN compensation may be more attractive. However, U.S. citizens employed at IAEA and UNESCO said that their agency did not clearly explain the benefits, or explained them only after the candidate accepted a position. Incomplete or late information hampers a candidate's ability to decide in a timely manner whether a UN position is in his or her best interest.

In addition, difficulty securing spousal employment can decrease family income and may also affect American recruitment since many U.S. families have two wage earners. At many overseas UN duty stations, work permits can be difficult to obtain, the local economy may offer few employment opportunities, and knowledge of the local language may be required. In addition, Americans with whom we spoke said that an unemployed spouse might not be happy as such, and might prefer to return to the United States where he or she can continue a career. U.S. employees at IAEA (located in Vienna) noted that difficulty in securing spousal employment is a significant problem for recruiting and retaining U.S. professionals at their agency.

²⁵The International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) is an independent expert body established by the UN General Assembly. Its mandate is to regulate and coordinate the conditions of service of staff in the UN common system, while promoting and maintaining high standards in the international civil service.

²⁶The UN common system represents common standards, methods, and arrangements applied to salaries, allowances, and benefits for the staff of the United Nations and those specialized agencies that have entered into a relationship with it. The common system is designed to avoid serious discrepancies in terms and conditions of employment, to avoid competition in recruitment of personnel, and to facilitate the inter change of personnel.

²⁷UN General Assembly, 60th Session. *Report of the International Civil Service Commission for the year 2005*. Supplement No. 30 (A/60/30). 12 August 2005. Official Record.

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- *Required Mobility or Rotation:* UNHCR and UNDP require their staff to change posts at least every 3 to 6 years with the expectation that staff serve the larger portion of their career in the field; the UN Secretariat and UNESCO are implementing similar policies. While IAEA does not require its employees to change posts, it generally only hires employees for 7 years or less. Such policies dissuade some Americans from accepting or staying in a UN position because of the disruptions to personal or family life such frequent moves can cause.
 - *Limited U.S. Government Support:* At four of the five agencies we reviewed, all except IAEA, a number of American employees said that they did not receive U.S. government support during their efforts to obtain a UN job or to be promoted at the job they held. The U.S. government currently supports candidates applying for director-level, or higher, posts, and puts less emphasis on supporting candidates seeking lower-level professional posts. State said that only on an exceptional basis is assistance given in support of promotions because the U.S.'s general policy is not to intervene in internal UN matters, such as promotions. State said the UN's "code of conduct"²⁸ makes it clear that it is improper for international civil servants to lobby or seek support from governments to obtain advancement for themselves and that governments should not accede to such requests nor intervene in such matters. Although UN employees are international civil servants directly hired by UN agencies, some countries facilitate the recruitment of their nationals by referring qualified candidates, conducting recruitment missions, and sponsoring JPOs or Associate Experts.²⁹

²⁸United Nations Secretariat, Secretary-General's Bulletin, *Status, Basic Rights and Duties of United Nations Staff Members* (ST/SGB/2002/13) 1 November 2002.

²⁹Associate Experts, also known as Junior Professional Officers (JPO) at other UN agencies, are entry-level employees that are financially supported by their home country. The sponsoring country may select candidates for the positions they fund, though the UN agency has the final decisions as to which candidate actually is hired. The standard length of Associate Expert and JPO appointments vary by donor, however, most serve from 1 to 3 years.

UN Secretariat: Lower Probability of Employment for Young Professionals Taking the Recruitment Exam than Those Participating in Country-Sponsored Program

At the entry level, hiring for professional positions is limited to an average of 2 percent of individuals invited to take the Secretariat's National Competitive Recruitment Exam (NCRE), while in contrast, the Secretariat hired an average of 65 percent of Associate Experts sponsored by their national government; however, the U.S. government has not sponsored any Associate Experts at the Secretariat between 2001 and 2005.³⁰ In addition, a lack of career development opportunities affects retention.

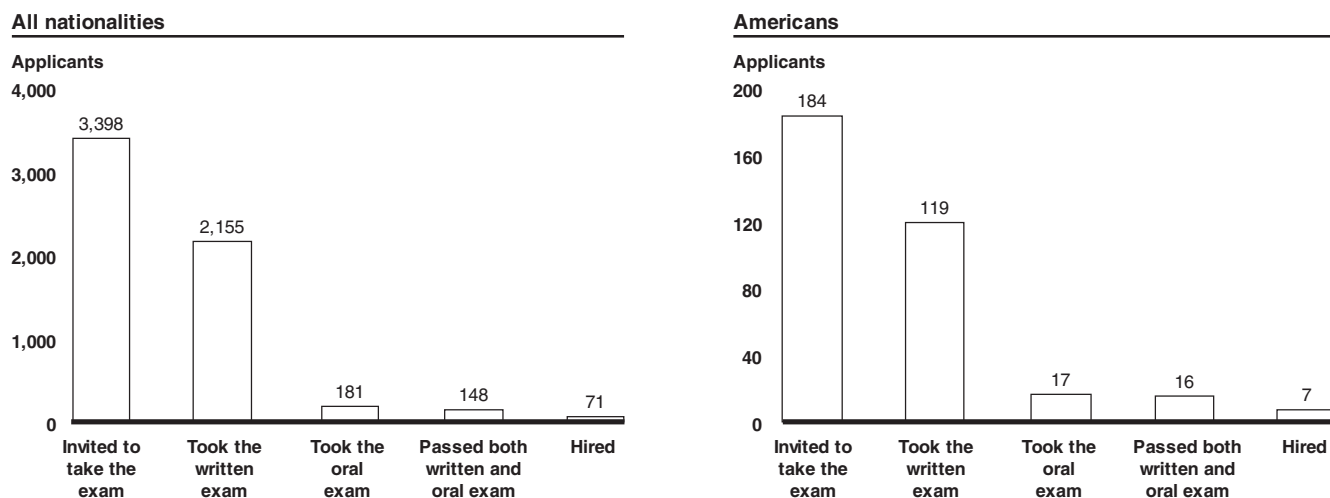
Exam Applicants Less Likely to Be Hired than Associate Experts at the Entry Level

Our review of the Secretariat's data shows individuals who take the NCRE³¹ have a lower probability of being hired than do Associate Experts sponsored by their national government at the end of their tenure. Of the 3,398 individuals invited to take the NCRE each year, the UN Secretariat hired an average of 71 individuals, or 2 percent, per year from 2001 through 2004. Though U.S. citizens fare slightly better than the general population (the Secretariat hires an average of 4 percent of Americans invited to take the exam), the UN Secretariat hires just an average of 7 Americans through the NCRE each year. Employees hired from the exam fill geographic posts and count toward country representation. Human resource officials noted that individuals who are hired through the exam process may be on the roster for 1 year or more before being hired. Figure 2 shows the number of applicants between 2001 and 2004 at various stages of the exam from all nationalities and from the United States, respectively.

³⁰NCRE hiring data are averaged from 2001 through 2004. Associate Expert retention data are averaged from 2001 through 2003. The average percent of Associate Experts retained from 1990 through 2003 is 58 percent.

³¹To meet its geographic targets, the UN Secretariat recruits employees for its entry-level (grades P1 through P3), geographically-designated posts through the NCRE. The Secretariat invites citizens of member states that are underrepresented or at risk of becoming underrepresented to submit exam applications. A certain number of individuals who meet all application requirements are invited to take the exam and then must pass both written and oral portions. However, for each country, a maximum number of 50 individuals may take the exam per occupational group. If the number of applicants exceeds 50, only the most qualified (as determined by the UN) will be allowed to take the exam. Successful individuals are then put on a roster; not all will actually be hired.

Figure 2: UN Secretariat National Competitive Recruitment Exam: Four-Year Average of All Nationalities and for Americans for Each Stage of the Exam (2001-2004)



Source: GAO analysis of UN Secretariat data.

Note: The number hired from any year could increase, because candidates who pass the exam can remain on the Secretariat's roster until their country is equitably represented, though most are offered posts in the first 1 or 2 years. The Secretariat provided preliminary data for 2005, but it is incomplete because the hiring process is ongoing for these applicants.

In contrast, the Secretariat hires an average of 83 individuals each year who have finished their tenure as Associate Experts. Given that donor countries together sponsor an average of 128 associate experts each year, 65 percent, on average, have been hired when they finish their tenure. However, individuals hired at the end of their Associate Expert service may or may not fill geographic posts. An average of 16 countries³² sponsor³³ young professionals in this program each year. The United States has not sponsored any Associate Experts at the Secretariat since at least 2001; therefore, no Americans have been hired in this manner between then and July 2006.

³²The leading supporters of Associate Experts at the Secretariat, on average from 2001 to 2005 are: Italy, Germany, Netherlands, France, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, and Japan. See table 4.

³³According to the Secretariat, the cost for sponsoring an Associate Expert can vary substantially given the individual and the duty station, ranging from approximately \$100,000 to \$200,000.

Lack of Career Development Opportunities Decreases Retention

The lack of career and promotion opportunities is one of the two most “demotivating” factors for UN employees, according to a 2005 survey of 5,320 UN staff.³⁴ Fifteen of the 19 American employees we interviewed at the UN Secretariat also cited a lack of career development opportunities as a factor negatively affecting U.S. retention. Staff also mentioned that contract distinctions limit career development, as individuals with short-duration contracts have difficulty obtaining regular posts. Peacekeepers, for example, work under an assignment of limited duration that can last up to 4 years. Although they have actual experience working for the Secretariat, they are considered external candidates and cannot apply as an internal candidate. Moreover, their time working in field posts does not count toward promotion eligibility. In recognition of this seeming inequity, the Secretary General has proposed instituting a single contract type to expand career opportunities.

IAEA: Decreasing Pool of American Candidates Limits U.S. Representation

Continuing U.S. underrepresentation at IAEA has been described by U.S. government officials as a “supply-side issue,” with the pool of American candidates with the necessary education and experience decreasing, as nuclear specialists are aging and few young people have entered that field. For those candidates that are qualified, IAEA may not be a particularly attractive place to work owing to its rotation policy.

Pool of Qualified American Applicants Decreasing

IAEA’s Director General reported that the recruitment of staff, particularly in the scientific and technical areas, is becoming increasingly difficult because the nuclear workforce is aging and retiring.³⁵ Similarly, a discussion paper from DOE’s Brookhaven National Laboratory³⁶ stated that American experts in the nuclear industry are aging and retiring while

³⁴This survey is cited in the following document, UN General Assembly, 60th Session (A/60/692).

³⁵Established to accelerate and enlarge the contribution of atomic energy to peace, health, and prosperity throughout the world, IAEA’s work requires much of its professional staff to be skilled in highly technical areas such as nuclear engineering and physics. IAEA’s demand for qualified applicants will increase over the next 7 years as staff members retire and 60 percent of the posts subject to geographic distribution become vacant.

³⁶*White Paper: Obstacles to Recruiting U.S. Citizens for IAEA Safeguards Positions.* Prepared by the International Safeguards Project Office, Brookhaven National Laboratory, April 2005, updated December 2005.

Rotation Makes IAEA
Employment Less Attractive

fewer U.S. citizens are seeking relevant technical degrees.³⁷ For example, according to the Nuclear Energy Institute, nearly half of nuclear industry employees are over age 47 and less than 8 percent of such employees are younger than age 32. The institute states further that over the next 5 years nuclear companies may lose an estimated 23,000 workers, representing 40 percent of all jobs in the sector. IAEA, as with all UN agencies, has a mandatory retirement age of 62, and according to State officials, the agency generally will not consider applicants above age 57 because they will not be able to complete the average 5-year contract. IAEA said it prefers to hire staff who can fulfill the normal five-year appointment but recently hired a staff member who would reach the mandatory retirement age in two years. Disqualifying nuclear specialists over age 57 dramatically limits the already small pool of qualified Americans able to work at IAEA.

For candidates who are qualified, IAEA may not be an attractive place to work owing to its rotation policy, particularly given that the agency tends to hire individuals at the mid-career level. American employees and U.S. and UN officials we interviewed cited IAEA's 7-year rotation policy as a disincentive to recruiting and retaining staff. The agency usually offers international professionals a 3-year contract that can be extended up to 7 years.³⁸ While IAEA is forthright about not being a "career" agency, the prospect of working only 3 to 7 years dissuades some Americans who are unsure if they can find meaningful employment at the end of their IAEA tenure. According to U.S. government officials who recruit candidates for IAEA, working at IAEA for a relatively short amount of time is not worth the risk to Americans already well-established in their careers. While the U.S. government guarantees its civil servants reemployment rights after working with an international organization, federally contracted national laboratories have inconsistent reemployment policies, which can be negotiated on an individual basis. Private sector firms may not offer any expectation of reemployment. U.S. government agencies who do rehire employees may not make use of the IAEA experience or may offer a salary

³⁷Experts in the nuclear power field report that the growth of nuclear capacity slowed greatly in the 1980s and 1990s due, in part, to safety problems, the inability to dispose of nuclear waste, the uncontrolled proliferation of fissile materials, and the lack of economic competitiveness. As such, the demand for—and therefore the training of—nuclear specialists decreased.

³⁸According to IAEA officials, at any point in time, about 39 percent of the staff is granted long-term contracts and stay for more than 7 years. The Director General decides every long-term contract based on the program's need, diversity issues, and the person's age and potential for growth.

that does not compensate for the intervening years of work experience, according to U.S. officials. Moreover, regarding retirement, some Americans working at IAEA told us that U.S. government agencies do not count their years at IAEA toward their years in U.S. government service. In addition, individuals may have to give up their U.S. security clearance to work at IAEA, which can take more than a year to reinstate.

UNESCO: Long U.S. Absence Contributed to Low Representation

Nineteen-Year Absence Decreased the Number of Americans Employed at UNESCO

The United States' 19-year withdrawal from UNESCO contributed to its current underrepresentation. Increasing American representation in the future may be complicated by budget restrictions.

The number of Americans employed at UNESCO declined during the 19 years that the United States was not a member. In 1984, the United States—accompanied by the United Kingdom in 1985—withdrawn from the organization over concerns about the agency's management and other issues. During the intervening years, in part because funding decreased considerably with the withdrawal of these two countries, UNESCO's staff decreased in size by about one-third. When the United States left UNESCO in 1984, Americans comprised 9.6 percent of the organization's geographic professional staff. When it rejoined in 2003, Americans comprised only 2.9 percent. By 2005 that number had increased to 4.1 percent—the third largest group of nationals UNESCO employed, although still below the minimum geographic target. Although UNESCO did employ American citizens during that time, it was not held to any geographic target for Americans because the United States was not a member.

Hiring Freeze Limits Opportunities

UNESCO must hire Americans in greater numbers to meet its minimum target for U.S. representation, which may be difficult in part because UNESCO may have limited hiring in the future. Vacancies available to external candidates may decrease given current budget restrictions, as UNESCO has applied a zero-nominal-growth policy to its regular budget. The organization thus plans to limit hiring for regular budget positions—which include all geographic positions—to filling vacancies created by retirement and other attrition.³⁹

³⁹As an exception, UNESCO advertises D-level positions at headquarters internally and externally, concurrently.

UNHCR: Difficult Working Conditions and Rigid Human Resource Policies Hamper Retention and Recruitment

Required Mobility through Hardship Posts Causes Attrition

The difficult conditions that accompany much of UNHCR's work, coupled with the requirement to change duty stations every 4 years, causes attrition at the mid-career levels. Moreover, various human resource peculiarities, including the predominance of indefinite contracts and staff-in-between-assignments, complicate the staffing process.

UNHCR's requirement that employees change duty stations every 4 years was one of the most frequently cited barriers to retaining staff among the American employees we interviewed. UNHCR's mission to safeguard the rights and well-being of refugees necessitates work in hardship and high-risk locations. As such, UNHCR has twice as many hardship duty stations as any other UN agency. At least one-third of its international professional staff works in posts where, in some cases, their family may not be allowed to accompany them. To alleviate the burden of serving in hardship posts, the majority of international professionals are expected to rotate between different categories of duty stations. However, a UN Joint Inspection Unit report found that the staffing system may not always allow staff to rotate out of the more difficult locations.⁴⁰ For example, employees who serve in hardship locations, especially in Africa, are less likely to rotate to headquarters and other nonhardship locations than other staff. Aside from possibly having to serve in hardship locations, moving frequently creates an unstable environment for staff and their families. UNHCR officials acknowledged that the organization faces a challenge in balancing its staff's personal and career goals with UNHCR's operational requirements. Several U.S. government officials noted that attrition among Americans has counteracted efforts UNHCR has made to hire U.S. citizens. For example, in 2004 and 2005, UNHCR hired 24 Americans, but in the same years 14 Americans left the agency, leaving a net gain of only 10 U.S. citizens.

Inflexible Human Resource System Limits Opportunities for External Hiring

UNHCR's policy to fill vacancies first with internal candidates coupled with the reality that most employees have indefinite contracts limits its external hiring, particularly given its number of staff-in-between-assignments. Given that UNHCR's workforce requirements regularly expand and contract, the agency typically has a number of staff-in-between-assignments for whom it does not have assignments corresponding to their grades and skills. As of July 2006, UNHCR had 135 such staff. However, human resource officials said that some individuals

⁴⁰U.N. Joint Inspection Unit. *Review of Management and Administration in the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees*. (JUI/REP/2004/4). Geneva, 2004.

have remained in between assignments for an extended period of time—some as long as 2 years. Because all staff-in-between-assignments have indefinite, rather than fixed-term, contracts,⁴¹ management has difficulty terminating those that refuse assignments or who lack needed skills, and the agency gives these staff placement preference over hiring external candidates. The priority given to placing staff-in-between-assignments limits the type of open external recruitment needed to ensure that UNHCR maintains an optimally skilled, dynamic, competitive, and gender-balanced workforce. In November 2003, to ensure that UNHCR adequately meets its workforce requirements, management created a policy to terminate the indefinite appointments of staff members who remained without a post for a protracted period. UNHCR human resource officials said that new rules entering into force in September 2006 are intended to reduce the protracted period from 12-18 months to 6 months. As of July 2006, UNHCR had terminated one staff who had remained in between assignments for an excessive period of time.

Despite high mid-level attrition, UNHCR currently limits recruitment to entry level positions, filling posts with candidates who must now pass an entry exam. Before introducing the exam in 2004, employees in JPO positions were allowed to apply to posts as an internal candidate. However, individuals that have served as JPOs or in other temporary assignments now must pass the entry exam and be added to the roster of qualified candidates before being eligible to apply for regular staff positions. U.S. citizens employed at UNHCR expressed strong concern about this policy because UNHCR recently hired 67 percent of Americans at the end of their JPO service into an agency position. Having to take a test may increase the time it takes to get a post, as the exam is only given once a year, and could decrease JPO retention.

UNHCR positions offered to external candidates will be further limited due to budgetary restrictions. As with UNESCO, UNHCR is planning to freeze hiring from the regular budget this year in order to limit the growth of the organization and realign the size of the workforce with the budget. One official estimated that there will be about 30 percent less recruitment this year because of the hiring freeze.

⁴¹By the end of 2004, 83 percent of UNHCR's regular professional staff held indefinite appointments. As of January 2006, 94 percent of staff at the P-4 and P-5 levels held indefinite appointments.

UNDP: While Several Common Factors Are the Leading Barriers, UNDP Is Also Seeking to Improve the North-South Balance of Senior Staff

Several barriers to increasing U.S. representation that are also present at other UN agencies are the leading factors at UNDP, according to American employees and other officials with whom we spoke. For example, many American UNDP employees told us that they did not receive support from the U.S. government during their hiring process or the course of their careers. Several of these employees stated that their discussions with us were the first time they had been contacted by U.S. government officials during their UNDP careers, and that both they and the U.S. mission would benefit from increased communication. U.S. staff also discussed UNDP's nontransparent hiring and personnel management policies, and the limited opportunities for external candidates, as barriers for increasing U.S. representation.⁴² In addition, UNDP's Executive Board has traditionally managed the organization with the understanding that its staff be equally represented from northern (mostly developed) and southern (mostly developing) countries, and has recently focused on improving the north-south balance of staff at management levels by increasing the hiring of candidates from southern countries. While this is a worthy goal, some American staff at UNDP commented that the organization's recent attention to increasing the hiring of senior staff from southern countries could increase the difficulty for American candidates seeking these positions. A senior UNDP official stated that he did not see the increased hiring of U.S. nationals (to maintain current representation levels) as a realistic and attainable target, given the above focus as well as profile, donor, program country, gender, and diversity considerations.

⁴²A senior UNDP official said that UNDP recently reviewed its selection and placement process to address the issue of transparency and the majority of UNDP staff commented favorably on the transparency principles being met. However, UNDP declined to provide us with this review, as it is an internal working document that includes other sensitive information.

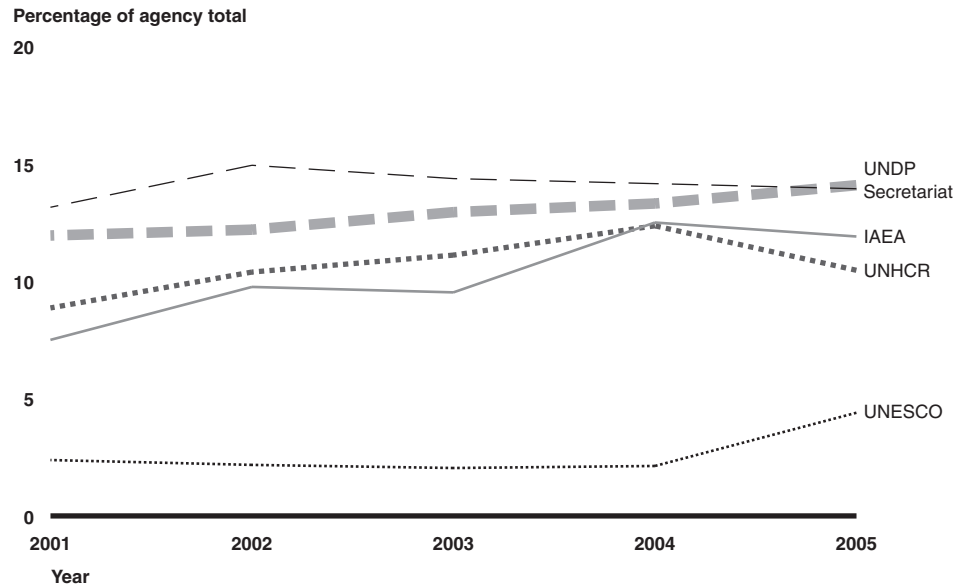
State Has Increased Efforts to Promote U.S. Representation, but Additional Options Exist to Target Professional Positions

State targets its recruitment efforts for senior and policy-making UN positions, and, although it is difficult to directly link State's efforts to UN hiring decisions, U.S. representation in these positions has either improved or displayed no trend in the five UN agencies we reviewed. State also has increased its efforts to improve overall U.S. representation, including adding staff to its UN employment office and increasing coordination with other U.S. agencies; however, despite these efforts, U.S. representation in entry-level positions has declined or did not reflect a trend in four of the five UN agencies we reviewed. Additional steps to target potential pools of candidates for these positions include maintaining a roster of qualified American candidates; expanding marketing and outreach activities; and conducting an assessment of the costs and benefits of sponsoring JPOs.

State Recruiting Efforts Focus on Senior Positions, and U.S. Representation in These Positions Improved or Showed No Trend

In 2001, we reported that State focused its recruiting efforts for U.S. citizen employment at UN agencies on senior-level and policy-making positions, and State officials told us that this focus has continued. Although it is difficult to directly link State's efforts to UN hiring decisions, the percentage of U.S. representation in senior and policy-making positions either increased or did not display a trend at each of the five UN agencies we reviewed between 2001 and 2005 (see fig. 3).

Figure 3: U.S. Representation in Senior and Policy-making Positions at Five UN Agencies as a Percentage of Agency Professional Senior and Policy-making Positions, 2001-2005



Source: GAO analysis of data from the UN Secretariat, IAEA, UNESCO, UNHCR, and UNDP.

Note: For the Secretariat, UNESCO, and IAEA, we used positions subject to geographic distribution. For UNHCR and UNDP, we used regular professional positions.

At all five UN agencies, the percentage of Americans employed in senior and policymaking positions was higher in 2005 than in 2001, but the trends and magnitude varied somewhat across the agencies, as figure 3 shows. The U.S. share of senior and policy-making positions has increased at IAEA and UNDP. The U.S. share of these positions at the other three UN agencies displayed no trend over the period. At the Secretariat, the U.S. share of senior and policymaking positions was slightly higher in 2005 than in 2001, although the number and percentage of Americans in these positions has decreased since 2002. At UNHCR, the number and percentage of U.S. citizens in these positions grew between 2001 and 2004, but declined in 2005. At UNESCO, the data for 2001 to 2004 did not reflect a trend, but the percentage of Americans increased in 2005. Overall, Americans hold over 10 percent of senior and policymaking positions at four of the five agencies we reviewed. (App. III contains more detailed information on U.S. citizens employed in all professional positions, by grade, at the five UN agencies.)

A U.S. mission official told us that the mission focuses its efforts on vacancies for critical senior jobs because of the influence that these positions have within the organization. If an American makes the short list for one of these positions, the U.S. Ambassador or another high-ranking U.S. mission official contacts the UN agency on behalf of that candidate. Officials at one of the U.S. missions we visited told us that the ambassador called UN agency officials on behalf of American candidates almost weekly. Several senior UN agency positions have recently been filled by Americans, including the UN Under-Secretary-General for Management and the Executive Director of UNICEF. UNESCO also recently hired U.S. citizens for the positions of Assistant Director-General for Education and the Deputy Assistant Director-General for External Relations.

As a part of this effort to recruit for high-level positions, State's UN employment office added a senior advisor in 2004 focused on identifying and recruiting American candidates for senior-level positions at UN organizations. This official works closely with the U.S. missions and U.S. agencies to identify senior-level UN vacancies and assist in the recruitment and support of Americans as candidates for these positions. The advisor also focuses on UN senior-level positions that may soon become vacant, including positions currently held by Americans, as well as by other nationals. Officials from one U.S. mission told us that it is critical to find out about vacancies before they become open because of the lead time needed to find qualified candidates. For those positions determined to be of particular interest to the United States, the senior advisor works with mission and agency counterparts to identify appropriate candidates to apply for the position when it becomes vacant.

State Has Increased Activities to Support Greater U.S. Representation, but the Employment of Americans in Entry-level Positions Declined or Displayed No Trend in Four Agencies

Since 2001, State has devoted additional resources and has undertaken several new initiatives in its role as the lead U.S. agency for supporting and promoting the employment of Americans in UN organizations, including adding staff to its UN employment office. State also has begun sharing its U.S. representation reports with UN officials. Additionally, State has increased coordination with other U.S. agencies. However, despite these efforts, U.S. representation in entry-level positions has declined or did not display a trend in four of the five UN agencies we reviewed.

State Increased Resources for Disseminating UN Vacancy Information

In 2001, State had two staff members working in its UN employment office, and since that time has increased the number of staff positions to five, plus a sixth person who works part-time on UN employment issues.⁴³ The new staff positions include the official focused on senior-level positions at UN organizations referred to earlier. According to State, the other staff in this office recruit candidates for professional positions at career fairs and in other venues; however, a large portion of their work focuses on providing information to potential applicants and disseminating information on UN vacancies and opportunities. A key part of this effort is the publication and distribution of a biweekly list of UN vacancy announcements. State officials publish these announcements on the department's UN employment Web site and also distribute the vacancies to agency contacts.⁴⁴ With this list, potential applicants are able to view externally advertised professional and senior level vacancies throughout the UN system in one location. Additionally, State recently coordinated with the Office of Personnel Management to add a link to its UN employment Web site from the USAJOBS Web site. State's Web site also includes a brochure with general information on UN employment opportunities and requirements, and a fact sheet requesting that candidates who have made a short list for a UN position contact the department for information and assistance. State's UN employment office staff also attend career fairs and other outreach activities at universities and professional associations to discuss UN employment opportunities. For example, State officials reported that they attended 15 events in 2005, including a nuclear technology expo and a conference on women in international security.

State also has increased outreach for the Secretariat's annual National Competitive Recruitment Exam for entry-level candidates by advertising for the exam in selected newspapers. The number of Americans invited to take the exam increased from 40 in 2001 to 277 in 2004. According to State and UN officials, in 2005, State placed one-day advertisements publicizing application procedures for the exam in five newspapers across the country.⁴⁵

⁴³One of the five staffers told us that she spends about 60 percent of her time on UN employment issues. The other four staff work on these issues full time.

⁴⁴<http://www.state.gov/p/io/empl/>.

⁴⁵State placed advertisements in the *Dallas Morning News*, *Los Angeles Times*, *New York Times*, *USA Today*, and *Washington Post*.

U.S. Missions Share U.S. Representation Reports and Discuss Openings with UN Officials

Another of State's responsibilities is to collect U.S. employment data from UN agencies and compile these data in annual reports to Congress. These reports include State's assessment of U.S. representation at select UN organizations and these organizations' efforts to hire more Americans. State now provides these reports to UN agencies, as we recommended in 2001, and does so by sending them to U.S. missions, which share them with UN officials. U.S. mission officials told us that they periodically meet with UN officials to discuss U.S. representation and upcoming vacancies. For example, officials from the U.S. mission in Geneva regularly meet with UNHCR's Director of Human Resources to discuss efforts to increase U.S. representation. One outcome of these efforts was that, in 2005, UNHCR representatives conducted a recruiting mission to the United States, visiting five graduate schools. In addition, the U.S. mission in Vienna meets with IAEA's director of human resources on a biweekly basis to discuss U.S. staffing issues.

State Increased Coordination with U.S. Agencies

In 2003, State established an inter agency task force to address the low representation of Americans in international organizations. According to State, the initial meeting was intended as a first step to coordinate and re-energize efforts to identify Americans for international organization staff positions. Since then, task force members have met annually to discuss U.S. employment issues. Task force participants told us that at these meetings, State officials reported on their outreach activities and encouraged agencies to promote the employment of Americans at UN organizations. One of the topics discussed by task force members was how to increase support for details and transfers of U.S. agency employees to UN organizations. In May 2006, the Secretary of State sent letters to the heads of 23 Federal agencies urging that they review their policies for transferring and detailing employees to international organizations to ensure that these mechanisms are positively and actively promoted.⁴⁶ Transferring and detailing federal employees to UN organizations for fixed-term assignments could allow Americans to gain UN experience while providing UN organizations with technical and managerial

⁴⁶Executive Order 11552, issued in 1970, mandates that federal agencies shall assist and encourage details and transfers of their employees to international organizations and that State shall lead and coordinate these efforts. The order also specifies that international organization vacancies should be brought to the attention of well-qualified federal employees and that upon the return of an employee to his agency, the agency shall give due consideration to the experience the employee may have gained during the detail or transfer.

expertise.⁴⁷ While the Secretary’s letters may help to spur U.S. agencies to clarify their support for these initiatives, agency officials told us that their offices lack the resources for staff details, which involve paying the salary of the detailed staff as well as “backfilling” that person’s position by adding a replacement.⁴⁸

State also periodically meets one-on-one with U.S. agencies to discuss in more detail strategies for increasing U.S. representation at specific organizations. A State official told us that State’s UN employment office holds a few of these one-on-one meetings per year. For example, in 2005, State met with the Federal Aviation Administration to discuss U.S. underrepresentation at the International Civil Aviation Organization. State also participated in a network of agencies and National Laboratories that work with IAEA, which has discussed ideas to address declining U.S. representation at that agency.⁴⁹ The U.S. mission in Vienna conducts periodic video-conference meetings with State, other U.S. agencies, and the U.S. national laboratories to discuss upcoming IAEA vacancies and identify U.S. candidates for these positions.

U.S. Entry-level Representation Declined or Displayed No Trend in Four of Five UN Agencies

Despite the new and continuing activities undertaken by State, U.S. representation in entry-level positions⁵⁰ declined or displayed no trend in four of the five agencies we reviewed. U.S. representation in these positions declined at IAEA, UNHCR, and UNDP. The representation of Americans in entry-level positions at the Secretariat displayed no trend during the time period. At UNESCO, U.S. representation increased from 1.3 percent in 2003 to 2.7 percent in 2004, reflecting the time period when the United States rejoined the organization (See fig. 4).

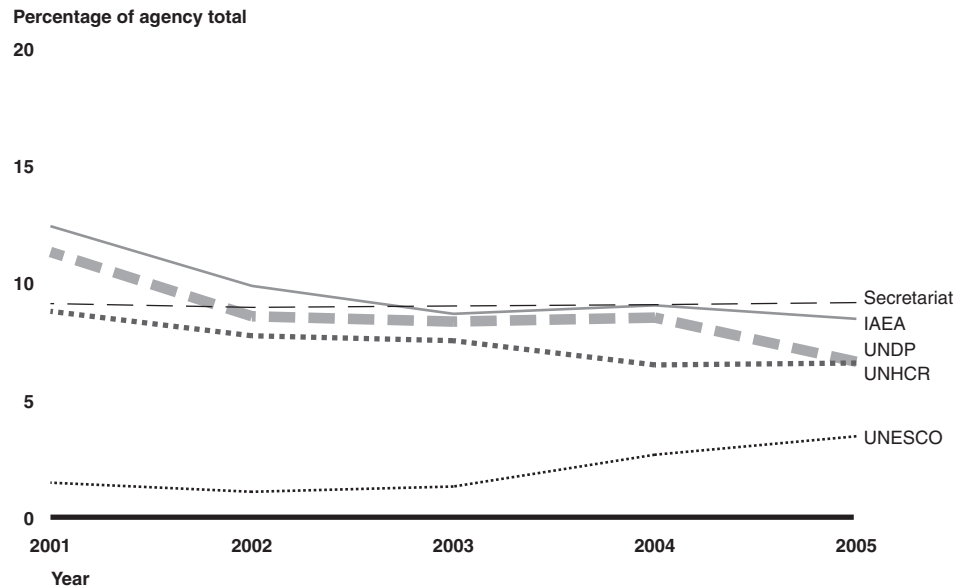
⁴⁷State reported that in fiscal year 2004, 168 federal employees from 16 agencies served on transfer or detail to UN agencies. Of the 84 employees detailed to UN agencies, the vast majority were from the Department of Health and Human Services’ Center for Disease Control and Prevention, on assignment at the World Health Organization.

⁴⁸Transferred employees are paid by the UN organization, while detailed employees would remain on the U.S. agency’s payroll.

⁴⁹In addition to State’s Bureau of International Organization Affairs, participants in this network include the U.S. Mission in Vienna, State’s Bureau for International Security and Nonproliferation, the Department of Energy, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, and the Argonne and Brookhaven National Laboratories.

⁵⁰We define entry-level UN positions as positions in the P1 to P3 grade levels.

Figure 4: U.S. Representation in Entry-level Professional Positions as a Percentage of Agency Entry-level Positions at Five UN Agencies, 2001-2005



Source: GAO analysis of data from the UN Secretariat, IAEA, UNESCO, UNHCR, and UNDP.

Note: For the Secretariat, UNESCO, and IAEA we used positions subject to geographical distribution. For UNHCR and UNDP, we used professional positions.

Additional Steps to Target Professional Positions Exist

We identified several additional steps to target U.S. representation in professional positions. These steps include maintaining a roster of qualified candidates, expanding marketing and outreach activities, increasing and improving UN employment information on U.S. agency Web sites, and analyzing the costs and benefits of sponsoring JPOs.

Roster of Qualified Americans Not Maintained

In 2001, we reported that State had ended its practice of actively recruiting Americans for UN employment in professional positions. As an example, we noted that State had previously maintained a roster of qualified American candidates for professional and technical positions, but discontinued its use of this roster. State officials told us that the office has not maintained a professional roster, or the prescreening of candidates, despite its recent increase in staff resources, because maintaining such a roster had been resource intensive and because the office does not actively recruit for UN professional positions at the entry- and mid-levels. However, State acknowledged that utilizing new technologies, such as developing a Web-based roster, may reduce the time and cost of updating

a roster. A State official added that it is difficult to make a direct causal link between current or proposed efforts by the department and the number of Americans ultimately hired by the UN because of the many factors at work that State cannot control.

Other U.S. government and UN officials told us that some other countries maintain rosters of prescreened, qualified candidates for UN positions and that this practice is an effective strategy for promoting their nationals. For example, some countries prescreen candidates for positions at the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) and thus are able to provide names of well-qualified applicants when openings arise that need to be filled quickly. An official also emphasized that peacekeeping in particular is a “growth area,” and the Secretary-General recently reported that the Peacekeeping budget has increased from \$1.25 billion to more than \$5 billion between 1996 and 2005. As discussed earlier, peacekeeping positions are not counted toward geographic representation targets and thus the increased hiring of Americans in these positions would not directly improve the United States’ representation status. However, these positions, along with other nongeographic positions, do provide an entry point into the UN system.

Recruiting and Outreach Efforts Do Not Reach Some Potential Applicants

Although State has increased staff resources in its UN employment office, it has not taken steps that could further expand the audience for its outreach efforts. For example, State has increased its coordination with other U.S. agencies on UN employment issues and distributes the biweekly vacancy announcements to agency contacts. However, some U.S. agency officials that receive these vacancy announcements told us that they lacked the authority to distribute the vacancies beyond their particular office or division. For example, one official commented that the vacancies were distributed within his nine-person office, but the office is not able to distribute the vacancies throughout the agency. An official from another agency commented that State has not established the appropriate contacts to facilitate agency-wide distribution of UN vacancies, and that the limited dissemination has neutralized the impact of this effort. Several inter-agency task force participants also stated that no specific follow-up activities were discussed or planned between the annual meetings, and they could not point to any tangible results or outcomes resulting from the task force meetings.

As discussed earlier, State officials attend career fairs and other conferences to discuss UN employment opportunities with attendees, but they have not taken advantage of some opportunities to expand the audience for their outreach activities. For example, State does not work

with the Association of Professional Schools of International Affairs (APSLA), which has 19 U.S. member schools.⁵¹ A representative of APSIA told us that the association does not receive vacancy announcements or have contact with State on UN employment opportunities but would welcome the opportunity to do so. Although State employees have attended Peace Corps career fairs to discuss UN employment, officials told us that State does not advertise in other outlets that reach the population of current and returned Peace Corps volunteers, such as the Peace Corps jobs hotline newsletter or the National Peace Corps Association's⁵² quarterly magazine, *Worldview*.

By contrast, a State official told us that the department's Office of Recruitment, Examination and Employment⁵³—which recruits candidates for the U.S. Foreign Service Exam—has worked with an advertising firm to develop a marketing strategy and campaigns focused on targeted pools of candidates for this exam. This official said that State has had a major emphasis on increasing the diversity of applicants for the U.S. Foreign Service, and its marketing campaigns have targeted schools with diverse student bodies and diversity-focused professional associations. State's recruiting office also has established an e-mail subscription service on its Web site that allows individuals to sign up to receive e-mail updates pertaining to their specific areas of interest. A State recruiting official commented that targeted campaigns are more effective than general vacancy announcements or print advertisements, and that the e-mail subscription service has been worth the cost of implementation. The official said that the cost of maintaining this service, for which she stated 100,000 people have signed up thus far, is about \$44,000 per year.

State, U.S. Mission, and Agency
Web Sites Have Limited
Information on UN
Employment Opportunities

State's UN vacancy list and its UN employment Web site also have limitations. For example, the list of vacancies is not organized by occupation, or even organization, and readers must search the entire list for openings in their areas of interest. Further, State's UN employment Web site has limited information on other UN employment programs and does not link to U.S. agencies that provide more specific information, such as the Department of Energy's Brookhaven National Laboratory Web site.

⁵¹APSLA also has 11 foreign schools as members.

⁵²The National Peace Corps Association is a nonprofit organization of returned Peace Corps volunteers, former staff, and friends that works to foster peace through service, education, and advocacy.

⁵³State's Office of Recruitment does not recruit Americans for UN positions.

U.S. Government Has Not Assessed the Costs and Benefits of Sponsoring JPOs Across UN System

In addition, the Web site provides limited information or tools to clarify common questions, such as those pertaining to compensation and benefits. For example, the Web site does not provide a means for applicants to obtain more specific information on their expected total compensation, including benefits and U.S. income tax. As mentioned earlier, some American staff in UN agencies told us that in considering whether to apply for a UN position, information on benefits was not clear. Incomplete or late information hampers a candidate's ability to decide in a timely manner whether a UN position is in his or her best interest.

Including State, we reviewed 22 U.S. mission and U.S. agency Web sites, and they revealed varying, and in many cases limited, information on UN employment opportunities. Overall, nine of the 22 U.S. Mission and agency Web sites we reviewed did not have links to UN employment opportunities, and only seven had links to UN recruiting Web sites. In addition, only six of the Web sites provided links to State's webpage on UN employment opportunities. Only three of the Web sites had information on details and transfers, six had information on JPO or Associate Expert programs, and 13 had no link to information on UN internships. Nearly 60 percent of the missions and agencies provided some information or links to information on salaries and benefits.

The U.S. government currently sponsors JPOs at two of the five UN agencies that we reviewed, but has not assessed the overall costs and benefits of supporting JPOs as a mechanism for increasing U.S. representation across UN agencies.⁵⁴ Among the five agencies, State has funded a long-standing JPO program only at UNHCR, sponsoring an average of 15 JPOs per year between 2001 and 2005. According to State officials, the JPO program at UNHCR is funded by State's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM),⁵⁵ which has a separate budget from State's UN employment office in the International Organization (IO) Affairs Bureau. State officials told us that the Department's IO Bureau

⁵⁴JPO or Associate Expert positions are funded by member states for 2 or 3 years and provide opportunities for young professionals to gain experience in UN organizations. While, upon completion of the programs, these young professionals are not guaranteed employment at the agency and must apply for positions through the regular process, UN officials stated that the JPO experience provides applicants an advantage over their competitors. For four of the five agencies we reviewed, JPOs and Associate Experts must apply for regular positions as external candidates. At UNDP, JPOs may apply as an internal candidate if they apply before the end of their tenure.

⁵⁵According to PRM officials, the bureau has funded 98 JPOs at UNHCR since 1984.

does not fund JPOs or Associate Experts at any UN agencies, including the Secretariat, which hires an average of 65 percent of Associate Experts following the completion of their programs. The other JPO sponsorship program among the five agencies we reviewed is run by the Department of Energy's Brookhaven National Laboratory, which has supported two JPOs at IAEA since 2004.⁵⁶ Table 4 provides data on the average number of JPOs and Associate Experts sponsored by the United States and by leading contributors to JPO programs at the five UN agencies we reviewed.

Table 4: Average Number of JPOs or Associate Experts Sponsored by Leading Contributors to These Programs, 2001-2005

Name of program	(Secretariat) Associate Expert	(UNDP) JPO	(UNHCR) JPO	(UNESCO) Associate Expert	(IAEA) JPO	Average yearly total for all five agencies
All donors	128	217	95	52	6	498
Japan	7	32	11	14	0	64
Italy	28	10	7	7	1	54
Denmark	11	26	10	3	0	49
Netherlands	14	15	7	3	0	40
Germany	18	12	3	5	1	39
France	12	16	8	3	1	39
Sweden	9	18	8	3	0	38
Finland	8	11	4	3	0	25
Norway	3	9	6	3	0	21
Spain	3	13	1	0	0	17
USA	0	0	15	0	1	16
Belgium	4	7	2	1	0	15
Switzerland	4	6	2	0	0	12
Canada	0	8	2	0	0	10

Source: GAO analysis of data from UN Secretariat, IAEA, UNESCO, UNHCR, and UNDP.

Note: The totals for each agency may not match the sum of the listed donors because not all donors are included in this table. We included countries that sponsored 10 or more JPOs across the five UN agencies. Also, the totals for each row do not necessarily add up to the sum of each cell in the row due to rounding.

⁵⁶According to officials, Brookhaven and State's Bureau for International Security and Non-Proliferation also fund Cost-Free Experts at IAEA. These are technical specialists who work on short-term projects at IAEA for periods of 1 to 3 years.

For four of the five agencies we reviewed,⁵⁷ the percentage of individuals that were hired for regular positions upon completion of the JPO program ranged from 34 to 65 percent. In some cases, former JPOs were offered regular positions and did not accept them, or took positions in other UN organizations, according to officials with whom we spoke. The estimated annual cost for these positions to the sponsoring government ranges from \$100,000 to \$140,000 at the five UN agencies.⁵⁸ (See table 5.) This cost can include salary, benefits, and moving expenses.

Table 5: Cost and Retention Rate of JPOs and Associate Experts

	(Secretariat) Associate Experts	(IAEA) JPO	(UNESCO) Associate Expert	(UNHCR) JPO	(UNDP) JPO
Estimated cost per JPO/Associate Expert per Year ^a	\$140,000	\$100,000	\$104,000	\$125,000	\$130,000
Retention rate	65% ^b	NA ^c	34% ^d	52% ^e	43% ^f

Source: GAO analysis of data from the UN Secretariat, UNDP, UNHCR, UNESCO and IAEA.

^aYearly cost for a JPO/Associate Expert at each agency varies depending on the individual's qualifications, duty station, and other factors.

^bRetention rate for Associate Experts who served in 2001 through 2003. The average retention rate between 1990 and 2003 is approximately 58 percent

^cIAEA did not provide retention rates.

^dRetention rate of Associate Experts who completed their contract between January 2001 and December 2005. Twenty percent were retained on fixed-term contracts; 14 percent were retained on other types of contracts.

^eRetention rate of JPOs and former JPOs retained for UNHCR posts through the Appointments and Promotions Board from 1996 to 2005. Retention rate of American JPOs who served at UNHCR between 2001 and 2005 is 67 percent; it increases to 71 percent if employment at other UN agencies is included.

^fRetention rate for JPOs who finished their service between 2001 and 2003. Retention is defined as JPOs being given a contract of at least 6 months somewhere in the UN-system.

A PRM official told us that the goals of its JPO program at UNHCR are both to help the organization accomplish its mission in the field and to help Americans gain employment at the agency. This official stated that of the 24 American JPOs who completed their service at UNHCR between

⁵⁷IAEA did not provide JPO retention rate data.

⁵⁸As with other UN employees, compensation for JPOs is determined on an individual basis and takes into consideration marital status, number of children, duty station, and several other factors.

2002 and 2005, 16 (or 67 percent) were hired back by the agency, and 1 was hired by UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. This official also told us that because the JPO program is actively used by other countries as a means of getting their nationals into the organization, not supporting JPOs at UNHCR would put the United States at a disadvantage.

As shown above, funding JPOs has a cost that must be considered together with other funding priorities. PRM and IO have acted independently in their determinations of whether or not to fund JPOs, with the overall result that State has funded an average of 15 JPOs at one UN agency and none at any of the other agencies. State has not conducted an assessment to determine which UN agencies the United States should prioritize in terms of increasing U.S. employment by funding JPOs. Such an assessment would also involve weighing the trade-offs between funding JPOs and other agency programs.

Conclusions

Achieving equitable U.S. representation will be an increasingly difficult hurdle to overcome at UN organizations. Four of the five UN organizations we reviewed, all except UNESCO, will have to hire Americans in increasing numbers merely to maintain the current levels of U.S. representation. Failure to increase such hiring will lead the four UN organizations with geographic targets to fall below or stay below the minimum thresholds set for U.S. employment.

As the lead department in charge of U.S. government efforts to promote equitable American representation at the UN, the Department of State will continue to face a number of barriers to increasing the employment of Americans at these organizations, most of which are outside the U.S. government's control. For example, lengthy hiring processes and mandatory rotation policies can deter qualified Americans from applying for or remaining in UN positions.

Nonetheless, if increasing the number of U.S. citizens employed at UN organizations remains a high priority for State, it is important that the department facilitate a continuing supply of qualified applicants for UN professional positions at all levels. State focuses much of its recruiting efforts on senior and policy-making positions, and U.S. citizens hold over ten percent of these positions at four of the five agencies we reviewed. While State increased its resources and activities in recent years to support increased U.S. representation overall, additional actions to facilitate the employment of Americans in entry- and mid-level

professional positions are needed to overcome declining U.S. employment in these positions and meet employment targets.

Recommendations for Executive Action

Because equitable representation of Americans employed at UN organizations has been a high priority for U.S. interests, we recommend that the Secretary of State take the following three actions:

- provide more consistent and comprehensive information about UN employment on the State and U.S. mission Web sites and work with U.S. agencies to expand the UN employment information on their Web sites. This could include identifying options for developing a benefits calculator that would enable applicants to better estimate their potential total compensation based on their individual circumstances;
- expand targeted recruiting and outreach to more strategically reach populations of Americans that may be qualified for and interested in entry- and mid-level UN positions; and
- conduct an evaluation of the costs, benefits, and trade-offs of:
 - maintaining a roster of qualified candidates for professional and senior positions determined to be a high priority for U.S. interests;
 - funding Junior Professional Officers, or other gratis personnel, where Americans are underrepresented or in danger of becoming underrepresented.

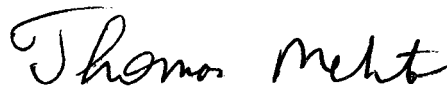
Agency Comments and Our Evaluation

We received comments from State, which are reprinted in appendix V. State concurred with and agreed to implement all of our recommendations. State said it attaches high priority to increasing the number of Americans at all professional levels in the United Nations and other international organizations. We received technical comments from State, IAEA, UNESCO, UNHCR, and UNDP, which we have incorporated as appropriate.

As agreed with your office, unless you publicly announce the contents of this report, we plan no further distribution until 30 days from the report date. At that time, we will send copies of this report to other interested congressional committees. We also will provide copies of this report to the Secretary of State; the United Nations Secretariat; the International

Atomic Energy Agency; the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization; the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees; and the United Nations Development Program. We will also make copies available to others upon request. In addition, this report will be made available at no charge on the GAO Web site at <http://www.gao.gov>.

If you or your staff have any questions about this report, please contact me at (202) 512-9601. Contact points for our Offices of Congressional Relations and Public Affairs may be found on the last page of this report. GAO staff who made major contributions to this report are listed in appendix V.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thomas Melito". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Thomas Melito, Director
International Affairs and Trade

Congressional Requesters

The Honorable George V. Voinovich
Chairman

The Honorable Daniel K. Akaka
Ranking Minority Member
Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management,
the Federal Workforce, and the District of Columbia
Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
United States Senate

The Honorable Henry J. Hyde
Chairman

The Honorable Tom Lantos
Ranking Minority Member
Committee on International Relations
United States House of Representatives

Appendix I: Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

In this report we reviewed (1) U.S. representation status and employment trends at five United Nations (UN) organizations, (2) factors affecting these organizations' ability to meet U.S. representation targets, and (3) the U.S. Department of State's current efforts to improve U.S. representation and additional steps that could be taken.

We reviewed five UN organizations: the UN Secretariat; International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA); UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR); and UN Development Program (UNDP).¹

Technically, the IAEA is an independent international organization that has a relationship agreement with the UN. For the purposes of this report, we refer to the IAEA as a UN agency or organization. We selected these agencies based on a range of factors such as: funding mechanisms (including agencies funded through assessed contributions as well as those funded primarily through voluntary contributions); methods for calculating geographic representation status (including agencies using formal geographic distribution formulas and those without formal targets for U.S. representation); agency size; agency location (including U.S.-based and overseas-based organizations); and agencies with varying levels of U.S. employment. These five agencies together comprise approximately 50 percent of total UN organizations' professional staff.

Methodology for Reviewing U.S. Representation Status and Employment Trends at Five UN Organizations

To determine the U.S. representation status, identify the trends in the number of professional positions held by U.S. citizens, and calculate hiring projections, we analyzed employment data for 2001 through 2005 that we obtained from the five UN organizations. Data generally refer to end of the calendar year, except for the Secretariat, which is for the year ending June 30. We had extensive communications with staff from each organization's personnel and budget departments to clarify details regarding the data. We determined the data were sufficiently reliable for the purposes of this review.

Calculating U.S. Representation Levels and Trends

To determine U.S. representation at the three U.N. agencies with geographic targets (the Secretariat, IAEA, and UNESCO), we calculated the percentage of U.S. citizens employed in geographic positions and compared this percentage with the agency's target. We calculated the

¹Throughout this report, UNDP data includes three UNDP suborganizations: UN Development Fund for Women, UN Volunteers, and UN Capital Development Fund.

geographic target for the Secretariat and UNESCO as a percentage range, in which the minimum and maximum number of national staff, as provided by the agency, is divided by the actual (full-time equivalent) geographic staff in the agency. The two agencies—the Secretariat and UNESCO—that set geographic targets consider three key factors to varying degrees in establishing the targets: membership status,² financial contribution,³ and population size.⁴ The Secretariat and UNESCO both use formulas for calculating geographic targets that take into account all three factors. For the Secretariat, the factors are 55 percent for contribution, 40 percent for membership, and 5 percent for population. UNESCO’s formula consists of a membership factor of 65 percent, a contribution factor of 30 percent, and a population factor of 5 percent. IAEA informally calculates a member state to be underrepresented if its geographic representation is less than half of its percent contribution to the budget. Using this method, we calculated a U.S. target.

The remaining two agencies—UNHCR and UNDP—have not adopted formal geographic representation targets. However, UNHCR has established an informal target with the United States. To determine U.S. representation at UNHCR in comparison to this target, we calculated the percentage of regular professional positions (100-series contracts) filled by U.S. citizens. Similarly, at UNDP, we calculated U.S. representation as a percentage of regular professional positions (100 and 200-series contracts) filled by U.S. citizens.⁵

For all five UN organizations, we also calculated U.S. citizen representation at each grade—policy-making and senior level (such as USG/ASG, D1/D2), mid-level (P4/P5), and entry level (P1-P3)—as well as for all grades combined. U.S. grade level employment representation is

²Membership status refers to the right of each member state to a number of positions. For example, in the UN Secretariat, a minimum of about 1 to 14 positions are assigned to each member state. This provision is especially important for countries with a relatively small population and small UN assessment, which could receive only one position if a minimum number of positions were not set.

³Member state contributions are the common factor used by UN organizations to determine targets or ranges because the level of budgetary contribution is an inherent factor in a state’s membership in the organization.

⁴Population size is used to ensure that member states are represented in keeping with their respective demographic profiles.

⁵At UNDP, 100-series contracts are issued for core functions. They are fixed-term contracts. The 200-series contracts are used for project posts.

calculated by dividing the number of U.S. staff at that grade level by the organization's total employment for the corresponding grade level. We also calculated U.S. citizen representation in nongeographic positions (for the Secretariat, IAEA, and UNESCO), and in the nonregular professional positions (UNHCR and UNDP)⁶ as a percentage of nongeographic (or nonregular) employment, respectively in these positions.

To determine whether there was a trend in U.S. representation between 2001 and 2005, we determined whether or not the slope of the best fitting line through these points would have a computed confidence level of 90 percent or more. If there is a trend, the sign of the slope (i.e., the coefficient) determines whether the trend is increasing or decreasing. A designation of no trend means that the confidence level does not reach 90 percent; however, the percentage representation of U.S. citizens may have fluctuated during the period. We cannot say these trends are statistically significant because of the small number of observations, the fact that these numbers are the actual population and not a sample, and because these numbers are not independent over time. Thus the 90 percent computation is not an objective criterion indicating statistical significance.

Calculating Hiring Projections

Our methodology assumed a gradual approach to the target. We calculated the minimum average number of U.S. citizens that each agency would need to hire each year between 2006 and 2010 to reach their respective percentage targets in 2010. The 2005 U.S. staff percentage representation was the starting point and an annual percentage increment (or decrement) was added to reach the minimum target in 2010. We then projected the required number of U.S. staff for each year as that year's percentage target multiplied by the projected size of the total staff for that year. The estimated number of U.S. staff in the agency in each year, before additional hiring of Americans, was based on the prior year's employment, less the projected retirements and separations for that year. If the projected number of Americans required to meet that year's target is greater than the estimated number of Americans in the agency, based on the prior year's employment and given departures in that year, then the

⁶For the Secretariat, IAEA, and UNESCO, nongeographic positions include regular professional positions not subject to geographic distribution, temporary positions, JPOs, and consultants and contractors. For UNHCR and UNDP, nongeographic positions are all other, nonregular professional staff, which includes temporary staff (limited fixed term at UNHCR and assignments of limited duration at UNDP), JPOs, and consultants and contractors.

number of Americans the agency has to hire is positive; otherwise, it is zero. Summing each year's number of Americans required to be hired to achieve each year's target, and then dividing by 5, yielded the minimum average number of U.S. citizens that the agency would have to hire to achieve the 2010 target.

We made three assumptions to calculate the hiring projections. First, for the Secretariat, IAEA, and UNESCO, we based our 2006 to 2010 staff projections on the recent growth rate (2001 through 2005) of each agency's staff. We calculated the future staff growth rate based on an ordinary least squares growth rate of staff during 2001 through 2005. UNHCR provided us with an official agency projected growth rate of zero percent, and UNDP provided a 6 percent growth rate that we used in our analysis. Second, we projected staff separations for 2006 through 2010 based on an average of the separation data that the agencies provided for 2001 through 2005. Third, we projected U.S. staff separations for 2006 through 2010 based on the average of U.S. staff separations to total staff separations during 2001 through 2005. We did not project future retirements because each agency provided their official retirement projections for total staff and for Americans. In addition, we performed sensitivity analyses by varying the staff growth and separation rates. We found that minor changes did not produce major differences in the results.

**Methodology for
Reviewing Factors
Affecting UN
Organizations' Ability To
Meet U.S. Representation
Targets**

To review the factors affecting organizations' ability to meet the employment targets, we reviewed UN agency documents and interviewed UN human resources officials, over 100 Americans employed at the five UN agencies, and U.S. officials. At each of the five agencies covered in our review, we met with human resources officials to discuss efforts taken to achieve equitable U.S. representation, the agency's hiring process, personnel policies and procedures, types of contracts and positions, and factors affecting U.S. representation. These officials also provided documents with further explanations of agency human resources policies and practices. We also met with State and U.S. mission officials and officials from other U.S. agencies that interact with the five UN agencies to discuss their views on factors impacting U.S. employment at these agencies.

In addition, we received the views of a total of 112 Americans⁷ employed across the five agencies on various UN employment issues. We gathered information from these employees through individual interviews, interviews in a small-group setting, or through group discussions. We also received written comments from some American employees. We met with employees in a range of grade levels (G, P, D, and ASG), contract types (such as temporary, assignment-of-limited-duration, fixed-term, indefinite, permanent), and with varying levels of experience at the agency. We did not select representative samples of American employees at any agency. Some individuals invited to participate in our review were unable to do so due to scheduling conflicts; some did not respond to our invitation. The American employees we interviewed as a percent of the total number of Americans employed varied at each agency. We asked each employee common open-ended questions about their background and experience, the hiring process, the extent of U.S. government assistance they received, and factors affecting U.S. representation.

Using the information gathered from the American employees, we coded comments about the factors affecting American recruitment and retention at the UN agencies into about 30 categories. As in any exercise of this type, the categories developed can vary when produced by different analysts. To address this issue, two independent GAO analysts reviewed and verified categorization of comments for each agency and suggested new categories. We then rectified differences. We then compiled a summary of factors across the five agencies and ranked them by the frequency they were mentioned. Another independent GAO analyst then reviewed and verified the summary compiled of all agency comments. We selected the factors affecting U.S. representation discussed in the body of this review by analyzing this ranked list in conjunction with information we gathered from UN and U.S. officials and our analysis of UN employment data.

⁷Specifically, we gathered information from 19 Americans employed at the UN Secretariat, 28 at IAEA, 15 at UNESCO, 32 at UNHCR, and 18 at UNDP.

Methodology for
Reviewing the U.S. State
Department's Current
Efforts to Improve U.S.
Representation and
Additional Efforts That
Could Be Taken

To assess strategies that the Department of State is using to improve U.S. representation and additional efforts that could be taken, we reviewed documents and interviewed officials from State's UN employment office. We discussed activities that State has taken since our 2001 report on U.S. representation at UN organizations, in response to recommendations made in that report, and reviewed State's documentation of these activities. We also reviewed other State documents, including its annual reports to Congress, *U.S. Representation in United Nations Agencies and Efforts Made to Employ U.S. Citizens*. In addition, we reviewed State's performance and accountability plans and reports, including State's fiscal year 2007 performance summary and the Bureau of International Organization Affairs fiscal year 2007 performance plan. In addition to meeting with State officials, we also met with U.S. agency officials that have participated in State's inter agency task force on UN employment or received UN vacancy announcements from State, as well as other U.S. agency officials. In these meetings, we discussed the activities and outcomes of the task force and these officials' views on efforts to increase the UN employment of Americans. We also discussed U.S. strategies and efforts for increasing U.S. representation with UN personnel officials and American employees of UN organizations. We also analyzed 22 U.S. agency and U.S. mission Web sites to review information that they made available on UN employment opportunities.

We conducted our work in Washington, D.C., New York; Geneva, Switzerland; Vienna, Austria; and Paris, France, from August 2005 to July 2006 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

Appendix II: Distribution of U.S. Citizens Employed in Professional Positions at Five UN Agencies

This appendix provides information on the number and percentage of U.S. citizens employed in professional positions at the five UN agencies we reviewed. For the three agencies that have geographic targets, we provide information on the number and percentage of U.S. citizens employed in geographic positions as well as in nongeographic positions. For the 2 agencies that do not have geographic targets, we provide information on the number and percentage of U.S. citizens employed in regular and all other professional positions.

Percentage of U.S. Citizens in Geographic and Nongeographic Positions Is Almost Equal

At two of the three UN agencies (the Secretariat and UNESCO) with geographic targets, the percentage of geographic positions filled by U.S. citizens is slightly higher than the percentage of nongeographic positions filled by U.S. citizens. The variation is more significant at IAEA where U.S. citizens fill 11.5 percent of the geographic positions and 17.1 percent of the nongeographic positions. Table 6 shows the number and percentage of U.S. citizens employed in geographic and nongeographic positions at the three UN agencies with geographic targets.

Table 6: Composition of Professional Positions at the Three UN Agencies with Geographic Positions, 2005

Professional positions	Secretariat		IAEA		UNESCO	
	Total number of staff in these positions	Number and percentage of these positions filled by U.S. citizens	Total number of staff in these positions	Number and percentage of these positions filled by U.S. citizens	Total number of staff in these positions	Number and percentage of these positions filled by U.S. citizens
Geographic positions	2,581	312 (12.1%)	764	88 (11.5%)	739	30 (4.1%)
Nongeographic positions ^a	5,837	557 (9.5%)	421	72 (17.1%)	898	17 (1.9%)
Total positions	8,418	869 (10.3%)	1,185	160 (13.5%)	1,637	47 (2.9%)^b

Source: GAO analysis of Secretariat, IAEA, and UNESCO data.

^aNongeographic positions include nongeographic regular professionals, temporary staff, JPOs, and consultants and contractors. The agency total professional staff for UNESCO, 1,638, includes all professional staff indicated; however, UNESCO was unable to provide nationality data for its contractors and consultants. Therefore, the U.S. percentage of nongeographic positions does not include U.S. citizens employed as contractors and consultants.

Table 7 shows that, on average at the three UN agencies with geographic positions and targets (the Secretariat, IAEA, and UNESCO), the percentage of U.S. citizens employed in all professional positions was fairly evenly divided between geographic positions (51.6 percent) and nongeographic positions (48.4 percent). However, the representation of

**Appendix II: Distribution of U.S. Citizens
Employed in Professional Positions at Five
UN Agencies**

U.S. citizens in geographic and nongeographic positions was close to the average only at IAEA, where the percentage of U.S. citizens was 55 and 45 percent, respectively.

Table 7: Percentages of Staff in Professional Positions at the Three UN Agencies with Geographic Positions, 2005

Professional positions	Secretariat		IAEA		UNESCO		Average percentage of U.S. staff in these positions
	Percentage of total staff in these positions	Percentage of total U.S. staff in these positions	Percentage of total staff in these positions	Percentage of total U.S. staff in these positions	Percentage of total staff in these positions	Percentage of total U.S. staff in these positions	
Geographic positions	30.7%	35.9%	64.5%	55%	45.1%	63.8%	51.6%
Nongeographic positions	69.3%	64.1%	35.5%	45%	54.9%	36.2%	48.4%

Source: GAO analysis of Secretariat, IAEA, and UNESCO data.

As shown in table 8, in the two agencies without geographic positions, UNHCR and UNDP, the percentage of regular professional positions filled by U.S. citizens is lower than the percentage of “all other” professional positions filled by U.S. citizens.¹

Table 8: Composition of Professional Positions at the Two UN Agencies without Geographic Positions, 2005

Professional positions	UNHCR		UNDP	
	Total number of staff in these positions	Number and percentage of these positions filled by U.S. citizens	Total number of staff in these positions	Number and percentage of these positions filled by U.S. citizens
Regular professional positions	1,495	119 (8.0%)	1,336	144 (10.8%)
All other professional positions ^a	314	35 (11.1%)	996	125 (12.6%)
Total professional staff	1,809	154 (8.5%)	2,332	269 (11.5%)

Source: GAO analysis of Secretariat, IAE, and UNESCO data.

¹“All other” professional positions is analogous to nongeographic in that “all other” and “nongeographic” both include temporary staff, JPOs, and consultants and contractors. However, nongeographic positions do include some regular professional positions for the 3 geographic agencies.

**Appendix II: Distribution of U.S. Citizens
Employed in Professional Positions at Five
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^aAll other professional staff includes: temporary staff (limited fixed-term professionals at UNHCR and assignments of limited duration at UNDP), JPOs, and consultants and contractors. While data provided by the agencies did not differentiate between support and professional level positions for consultants and contractors, UNDP indicated that 80 percent of these positions (known as Special Short-Term Assignments or SSAs) are for temporary support functions. There were 635 SSAs at UNDP in 2005.

As shown in table 9, at UNHCR and UNDP, the percentage of U.S. citizens in regular professional positions (staff under contracts of longer fixed terms) averaged 65.4 percent of the total U.S. professional staff compared with 34.6 percent for U.S. representation in all other, or more temporary, professional positions. That is, there are relatively more Americans in regular professional positions, 65.4 percent, than there are Americans in all other professional positions, 34.6 percent.

Table 9: Percentages of Staff in Professional Positions at the Two UN Agencies without Geographic Positions, 2005

Professional positions	UNHCR		UNDP		Average percentage of U.S. staff in these positions
	Percentage of total staff in these positions	Percentage of total U.S. staff in these positions	Percentage of total staff in these positions	Percentage of total U.S. staff in these positions	
Regular professional positions	82.6%	77.3%	57.3%	53.5%	65.4%
All other professional positions	17.4%	22.7%	42.7%	46.5%	34.6%

Source: GAO analysis of UNHCR and UNDP data.

**Americans Held
Geographic and
Nongeographic Policy-
making and Senior Level
Positions at Three UN
Agencies**

At IAEA and UNESCO, over 80 percent of the policy-making and senior-level positions are geographic. However, these positions are more evenly divided at the Secretariat, with 54 percent subject to geographic designation and 46 percent not subject to geographic designation. (See table 10).²

Table 10: Policy-making and Senior-level Positions at Three UN Agencies, 2005

	Policy-making and senior level positions			
	Total number	Percentage of total number of positions	Number of positions held by U.S. citizens	Percentage of positions held by U.S. citizens
Secretariat				
Geographic positions	330	54%	46	14%
Nongeographic positions	276	46%	24	9%
IAEA				
Geographic positions	42	93%	5	12%
Nongeographic positions	3	7%	0	0%
UNESCO				
Geographic Positions	91	81%	4	4%
Nongeographic Positions	21	19%	1	5%

Source: GAO analysis of Secretariat, IAEA, and UNESCO data.

²The 24 high-level nongeographic positions that Americans held at the Secretariat in 2005 included 2 policy-making and 22 senior-level positions. Significantly, the number of nongeographic policy-making positions held by U.S. citizens declined at the Secretariat from 7 positions in 2001 to 2 in 2005, while the number of geographic policy-making positions held by U.S. citizens has remained constant at 3. During this time, there was virtually no change in the number of geographic policy-making positions at the Secretariat, but the number of nongeographic policy-making positions increased by 12 between 2004 and 2005.

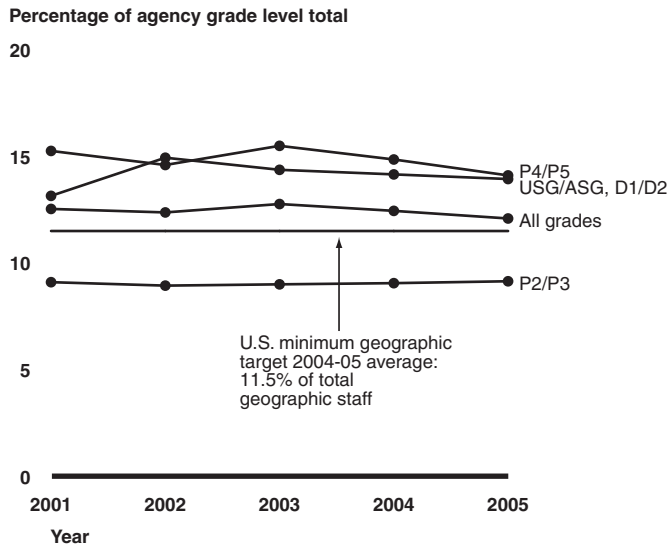
Appendix III: Trends of U.S. Citizens Employed in Professional Positions at Five UN Agencies

In “all grades,” U.S. citizen representation in geographic positions at the Secretariat, IAEA, and UNESCO and in regular professional positions at UNDP displays no trend at the 90 percent confidence level. However, at UNHCR, U.S. representation decreased in regular professional positions. Figure 5 shows the trends in U.S. representation, by grade, at each agency.

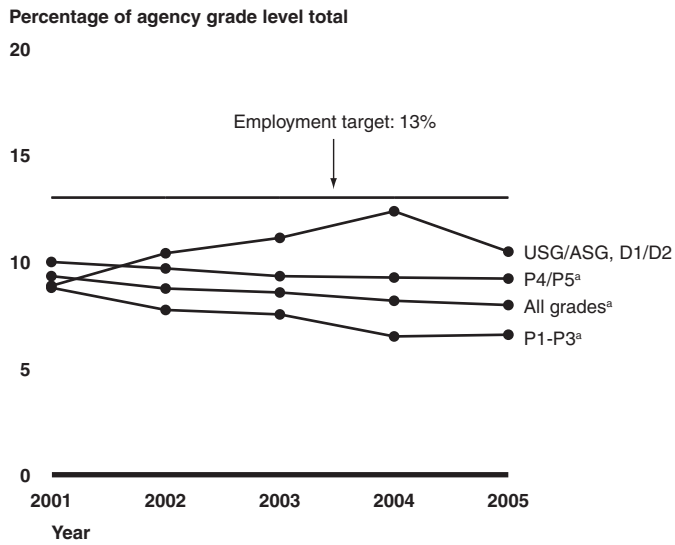
**Appendix III: Trends of U.S. Citizens
Employed in Professional Positions at Five
UN Agencies**

Figure 5: Trends of U.S. Citizen Representation, by Grade, in Professional Positions in Five UN Agencies

UN Secretariat

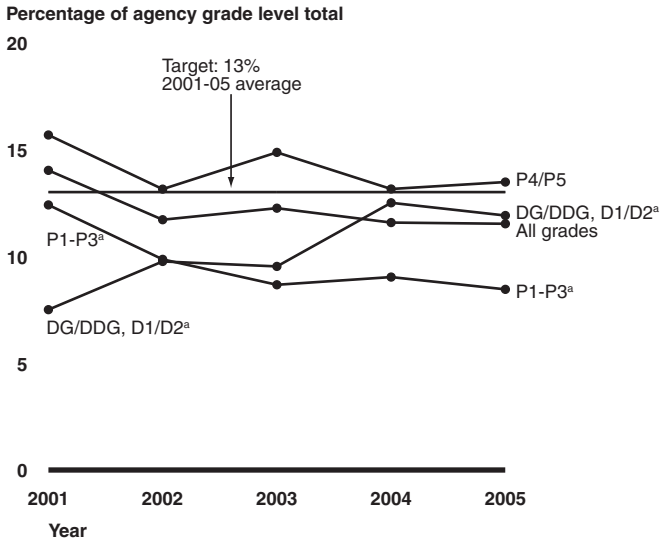


UNHCR

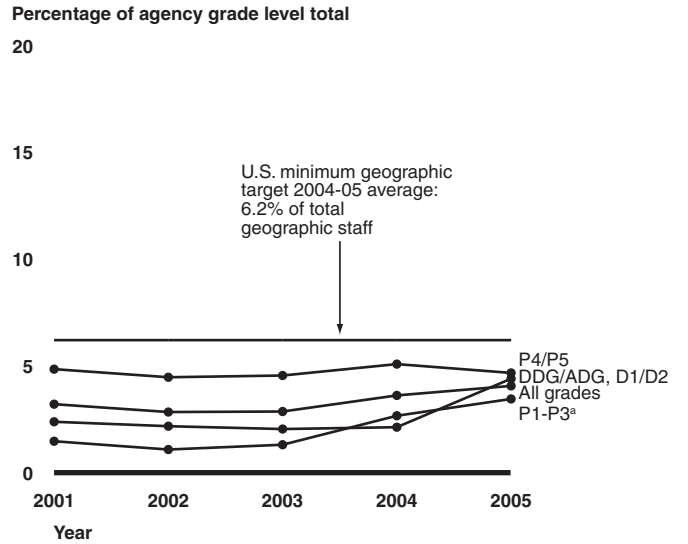


**Appendix III: Trends of U.S. Citizens
Employed in Professional Positions at Five
UN Agencies**

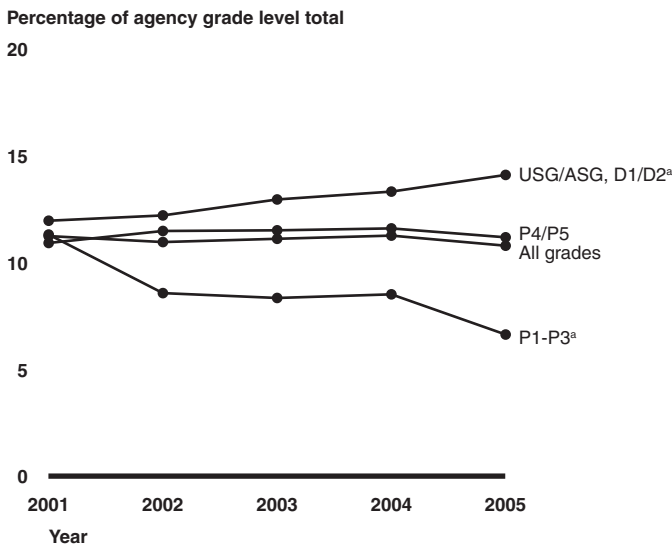
IAEA



UNESCO



UNDP



Source: GAO analysis of Secretariat, IAEA, UNESCO, UNHCR, and UNDP data.

^aConfidence level 90 percent or higher.

**Appendix III: Trends of U.S. Citizens
Employed in Professional Positions at Five
UN Agencies**

Notes:

For the Secretariat, IAEA, and UNESCO, the trend analysis is for U.S. citizens in geographic positions, 2001 through 2005; the trend analysis covers 2001 through 2005 for UNHCR and UNDP and is for U.S. citizens in regular professional positions since these agencies do not have geographic positions. Regular professional positions for UNHCR and UNDP include staff under contracts of longer fixed-term (100-series contracts for UNHCR and 100- and 200-series for UNDP).

Senior-level positions represent UN position levels D1 and D2, roughly equivalent to U.S. government Senior Executive Service. Policy-making positions represent UN position levels of Deputy or Assistant Director General at IAEA and UNESCO and Under or Assistant Secretary General at the Secretariat, UNHCR, and UNDP. UN position levels P1 to P3 are roughly equivalent to U.S. government grade levels 9 to 12/13. UN position levels, P4 and P5 are roughly equivalent to US government grade levels 13 and 15.

As shown in figure 5, U.S. citizen representation in policy making and senior level positions increased at IAEA and UNDP and increased in entry level positions at UNESCO. However, U.S. citizen representation in entry level positions decreased at IAEA, UNHCR, and UNDP. In addition, U.S. citizen representation decreased in mid-level positions at UNHCR, as well as over “all grades.” The 90 percent confidence interval does not imply statistical significance. Refer to our methodology for calculating trends in app. I.

Appendix IV: Definitions of Promotion, Internal Hires, and External Hires

Table 11 provides further information on the terms promotion, internal hire, and external hire, as provided by each of the five UN agencies we reviewed for the purposes of this report.

Table 11: Definitions of Promotion, Internal Hires, and External Hires at Five UN Agencies Provided for the Purposes of This Report

Secretariat	IAEA	UNESCO	UNHCR	UNDP
Promotion				
All promotions are internal. (See below.)	Changes in grade for staff holding fixed-term and long-term contracts resulting from competitive vacancy notice action. Merit promotions and reclassification of posts are not competitive and are not included in figure 1.	Appointment to a higher grade post after competition; reclassification of post and promotion in a linked grade post whereby the incumbent of a P1/P2 post moves from the P1 grade to the P2 are not competitive and are not included in figure 1.	Official appointment to a higher grade post.	Assignment at a higher level post (after competitive selection) and/or demonstrated performance at the higher level based on time in grade.
Internal				
Staff currently serving under a 100-series appointment, recruited after a competitive examination or after the advice of a Secretariat joint body. Staff whose appointment is limited to service in a particular department are not considered internal.	Staff holding a contract with the IAEA at the time of their application.	Staff members with an indeterminate or fixed-term contracts (excluding Associate Experts) and temporary appointments.	Recruitment into the international professional category of persons who are already UNHCR staff appointed on regular posts and with regular contracts, including general service staff and National Professional Officers.	Staff who have had previous UNDP assignments (i.e., ALD). Includes UNDP International Professional Staff 100- and 200- Rule Series, or staff who have been in the UN Common System prior to joining UNDP.
External				
All appointments are external and all external posts are advertised. Includes those who have previous experience working at the Secretariat.	Staff not holding a contract with the IAEA at the time of their application, including former staff members.	All other candidates, including those from the UN system not mentioned above, are external.	Recruitment into the international professional category of persons who may have had prior working experience with UNHCR (e.g., JPOs) but who were not appointed on a regular post through the established appointment and postings procedures.	Staff who are not internal are considered external, for the purposes of GAO reporting on UNDP appointments.

Source: GAO compilation of information from the UN Secretariat, IAEA, UNESCO, UNHCR and UNDP.

Appendix V: Comments from the Department of State



United States Department of State

*Assistant Secretary for Resource Management
and Chief Financial Officer*

Washington, D.C. 20520

Ms. Jacquelyn Williams-Bridgers
Managing Director
International Affairs and Trade
Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20548-0001

AUG 18 2006

Dear Ms. Williams-Bridgers:

We appreciate the opportunity to review your draft report, "UNITED NATIONS: Additional Efforts Needed to Increase U.S. Employment at UN Agencies," GAO Job Code 320364.

The enclosed Department of State comments are provided for incorporation with this letter as an appendix to the final report.

If you have any questions concerning this response, please contact Lynette Podolsky, Program Analyst, Bureau of International Organizational Affairs, at (202) 647-6396.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "S. Kaplan".

Sid Kaplan (Acting)

cc: GAO – Cheryl Goodman
IO – James B. Warlick
State/OIG – Mark Duda

**Department of State Comments on GAO Draft Report
United Nations: Additional Efforts Needed to Increase
U.S. Employment at UN Agencies
(GAO-06-988, GAO Code 320364)**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on your draft report entitled United Nations: Additional Efforts Needed to Increase U.S. Employment at UN Agencies. The Department of State attaches high priority to increasing the number of Americans at all professional levels in the United Nations and other international organizations. This is the second GAO review concerning issues relevant to this subject.

We appreciate GAO's recognition of the Department of State's increased efforts to improve the representation of Americans in international organizations. Nevertheless, we agree that more can be done and will act on GAO's recommendations to this effect. We believe that the GAO report reflects an important balance by highlighting some aspects of international organization employment that are beyond U.S. control.

Specifically, we concur with GAO's recommendation that the websites of the Department and U.S. missions should be expanded to include more information relevant to employment in international organizations and believe this can be done on a generic, and sometimes on an organization-specific, basis. Although compensation practices vary by international organization, and within organizations the salaries and benefits vary by grade level, we will look into the feasibility of developing a benefits calculator that surmounts the problems inherently involved with such dissimilarities.

Also, we concur with the recommendation to expand targeted recruiting and outreach and will attempt to more strategically reach populations of Americans who may be interested in all professional level jobs, not just the entry- and mid-level positions mentioned in the report.

Lastly, as recommended, we will evaluate the feasibility of 1) establishing and maintaining a roster of qualified candidates for professional and higher positions of particular interest to the U.S. government and 2) the use of Junior Professional Officers or gratis personnel where it would be in the interests of the U.S. government.

We appreciate GAO's recommendations in its report on some tangible ways to improve the Department's outreach efforts. We will continue to work with other U.S. agencies, U.S. missions, and the international organizations themselves to try to increase the representation of Americans on their rolls in professional positions.

Appendix VI: GAO Contact and Staff Acknowledgments

GAO Contact

Thomas Melito (202) 512-9601 or melitot@gao.gov

Staff Acknowledgments

In addition to the person named above Cheryl Goodman, Assistant Director; Jeremy Latimer; Miriam Carroll; Roberta Steinman; Barbara Shields; and Joe Carney made key contributions to this report. Martin De Alteriis, Bruce Kutnick, Anna Maria Ortiz, and Mark Speight provided technical assistance.

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