

The IAEA's strength

Human resources have been the Agency's lifeblood

by Metin Camcigil

What is an international organization?

Though the answer may be given in legal, political, or other terms, no matter how we look at it, an international organization is basically the intent of its membership. The membership constitutes the organization, determines its objectives, and provides funds for its operations. But it is through individuals assigned to do the jobs that the membership's intent materializes. They are the ones who make it a success or a failure.

However, today the executive heads of international organizations of the United Nations system are questioning the continuing capability of organizations to carry out the intentions of their memberships in the face of eroding service conditions in an unfavourable climate that has prevailed for longer than many people may realize.

At the IAEA, as in many organizations of the UN system, the constant erosion of basic conditions of service make it more and more difficult to attract or even to retain the high calibre of staff that is needed to execute programmes and deliver desired services to further

international development and progress. What lies in store for the future if the situation goes on?

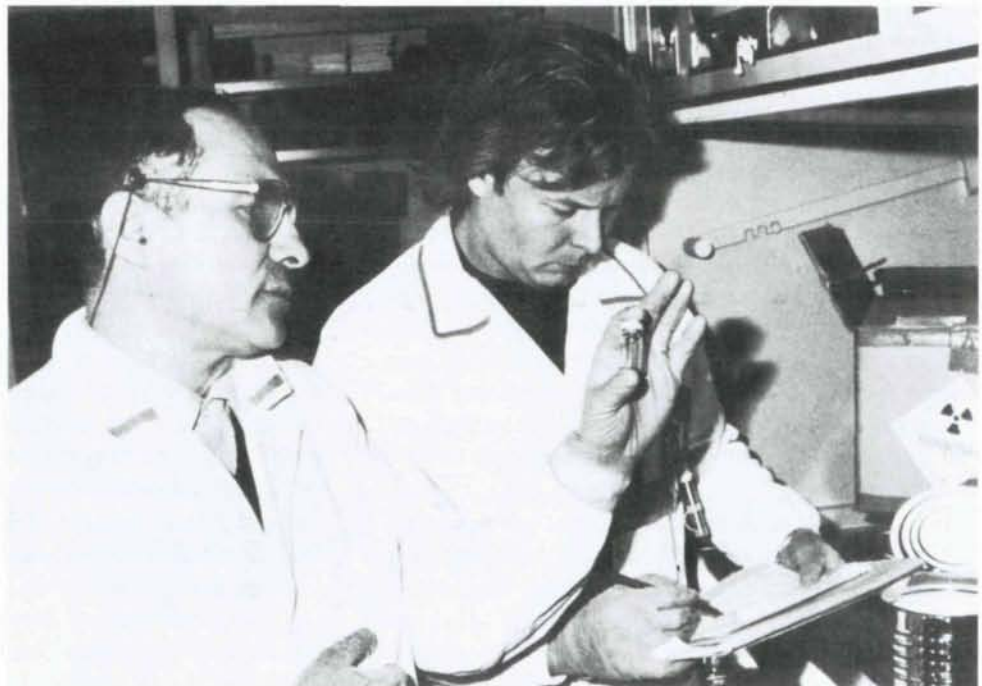
Over its 30 years of operations, the Agency's international civil servants have provided Member States with an impressive range of services and products in areas of technical assistance, international safeguards, and scientific information exchange. (See accompanying graph.)

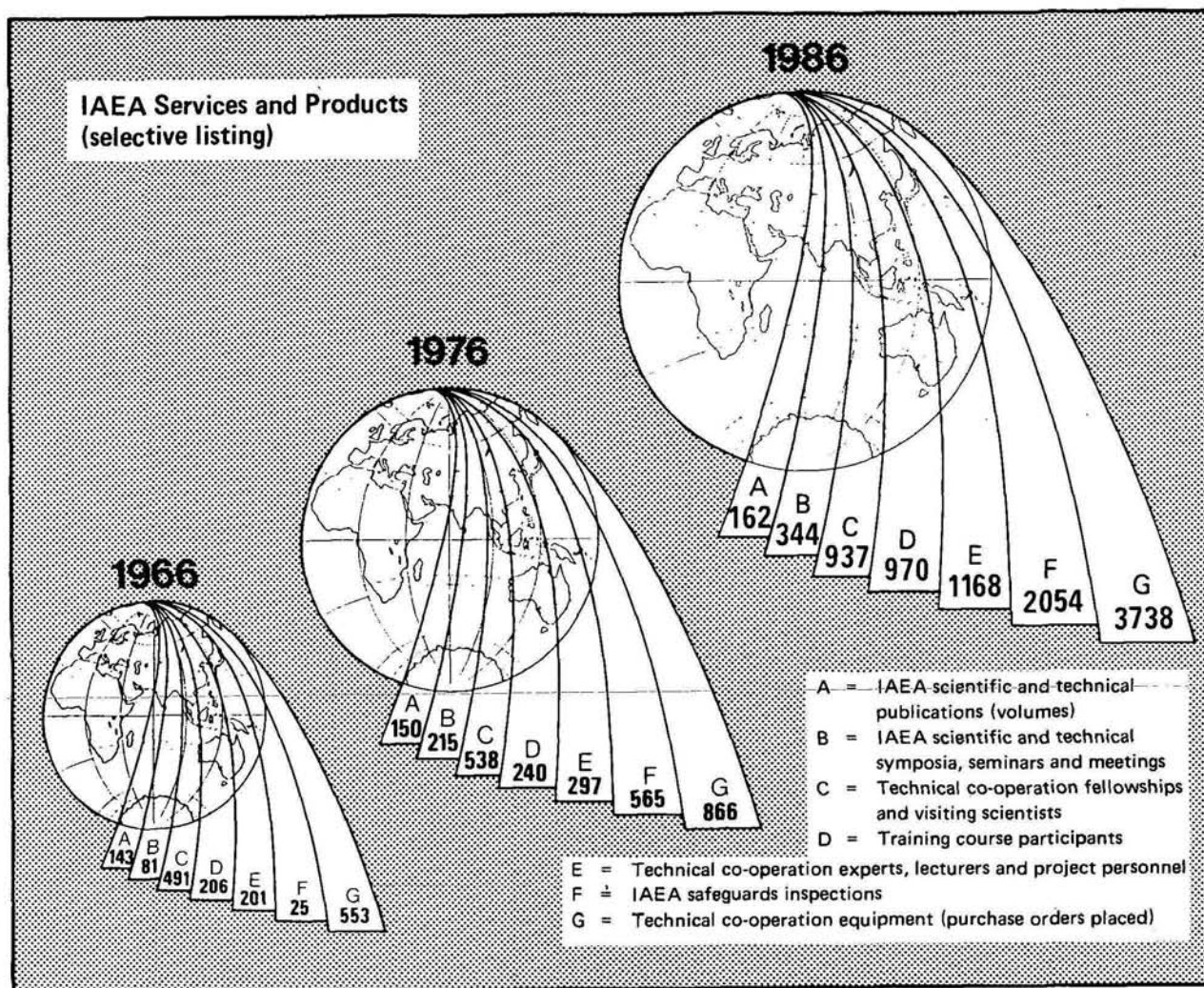
While most IAEA services and products, as well as the budget, increased in the last 20 years by a factor of between 5 to 10, the human resources increased by a factor of 2.5. Although efficiency can be measured in a variety of ways, these statistics provide a simple and quick view of the evolution of human resources versus products in the Agency. In some respects, these achievements may be taken for granted: The Agency's personnel policy mandates that "the paramount consideration in the recruitment and employment of the staff and in the determination of the conditions of service shall be to secure employees of the highest standards of efficiency, technical competence, and integrity".* The staff is expected to perform commensurately, and they do.

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* IAEA Statute, Art. VII-D.

The IAEA's extensive safeguards experience includes analysis of nuclear material from its safeguards inspections at nuclear installations. Shown here are samples being received at the Agency's Safeguards Analytical Laboratory. (Credit: Katholitzky for IAEA)





As a result, the IAEA has gained a reputation for being a well-managed and efficient organization. What has been the secret behind this, if not the quality of its human resources? Without the co-operation of qualified and dedicated staff, no management can succeed, despite having all available funds, expertise, and good intentions. At the IAEA, staff/management relations have been consistently constructive, not only because the administration has had an advanced approach to the art of management, but also because the staff actively, knowledgeably, and in a disciplined fashion contributes to the organization's good management. In fact, the Agency's staff has either initiated or contributed to a number of management innovations, apart from those that individuals have initiated and directed to the substance of their own work or to the work methods of their immediate unit.

In addition, under the prevailing "zero-growth" budgetary environment, staff members have smoothly and obligingly adapted to the demanding requests by Member States for ever-increasing efficiency. This is a remarkable contribution to the achievements of management: to increase programmes and reporting and evalua-

tion activities without increasing expenditures — and in fact accepting reductions in professional staff pay — cannot be attributed to anything less than this co-operative attitude and commitment to the privilege of international service.

All Agency achievements, many of which are noted and summarized in the pages of this 30th anniversary edition of the *IAEA Bulletin*, have been the result of not only special knowledge that staff brought to the organization, but also the product of hard work. The qualifications of hard work and dedication are not used here as platitudes: Be it known that it is quite common for IAEA staff members to work beyond office hours or outside workdays without necessarily expecting compensation for it, while it is not so common in all national or international, private or public, organizations. This sincere and genuine dedication to work permeates the organization and defines its spirit. It is this attitude that has given the organization its institutional identity and cohesion.

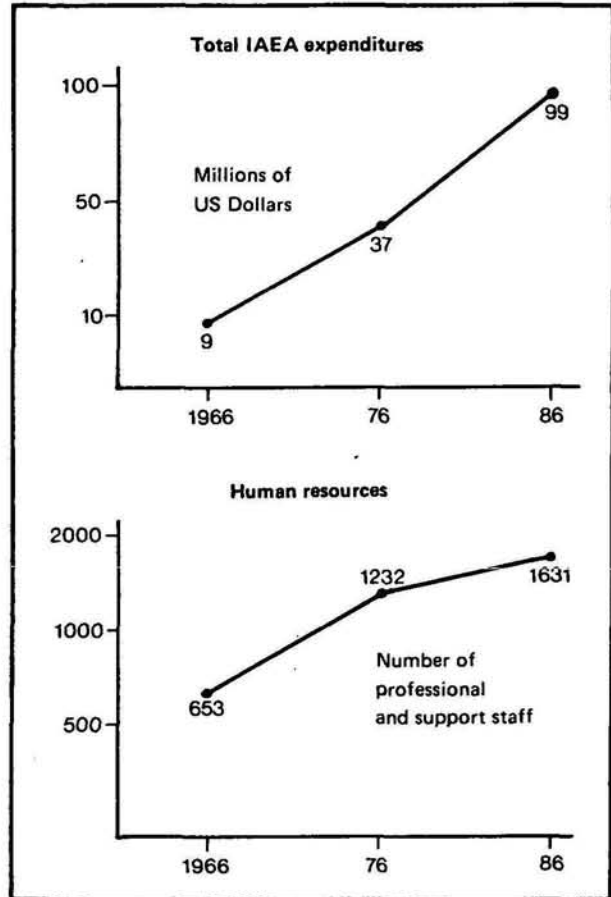
Such identity is particularly important, but at the same time difficult to develop, in the heterogeneous environment of varying cultural backgrounds typically characterizing the staff of an inter-governmental organi-

zation, where there are also several differing if not conflicting interests and forces influencing the organization. In such an environment, the institutional identity cannot be expected to be handed down to the staff by the governing organs of the organization. If an international organization has any institutional identity at all, it is the staff's corporate sense of belonging to the organization that brings it about.

Against this background, in surveying the resolutions of the IAEA General Conference and the decisions of the Board of Governors adopted in the past 30 years, I did not come across any decision that extended some sort of recognition to the staff, although it cannot be denied that on several occasions individual Member States did so. Conversely, the governing organs found it convenient to follow closely the recent actions of the United Nations General Assembly to systematically erode the conditions of service of professional staff. These decisions were followed even though they were taken in a different environment, under different circumstances, by a different organization, for different purposes, and on the basis of incomplete information. Nor can one find in the staff regulations of the Agency an established system of promotion or merit award.

In my view, the Agency cannot be expected to maintain its reputation as a good manager, nor to continue its high level of performance, in such a climate because of the increasing difficulty in attracting and retaining staff of the highest competence and loyalty. Without change, I fear that it may not be possible to write an article such as this 30 years from now.

I am confident, however, that today's staff and management will join in extending to all staff members who came and went by simple rotation, retirement, or, alas, death, their heartfelt thanks for the small and big,



individual or joint, contributions that they made to the well-being, excellent reputation, successes, and achievements of the Agency — in short, to making the IAEA what it is today.



Correction

In the English edition of *IAEA Bulletin*, Vol. 29, No. 2, the photo feature (pages 18–19) on the sterile insect technique in Japan misidentified the target species because of a translation error. The correct target of the project is the melon fly. The editor regrets the error.