

## **ASSOCIATION OF GENERAL SECRETARIES OF PARLIAMENTS**

### **THE ROLE OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL IN THE ADMINISTRATION OF PARLIAMENT**

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#### **Introduction**

The September 1998 Conference of the Association of Secretaries-General of Parliaments, meeting in Moscow, embarked on an examination of the role of the Secretaries-General in parliamentary administrations.

It was then decided to make this issue the subject-matter of a questionnaire in order to try to establish a number of common features, despite our countries' widely differing political and institutional systems, which would help us to examine in greater depth the features and the functions of the Secretaries-General in the parliamentary institutions.

The questionnaire was subsequently approved in Brussels in April 1999 and was circulated to all the members of the Association. The Italian Chamber of Deputies received 71 replies, drafted by the Secretaries-General of 76 Parliamentary Assemblies, representing 56 countries.

The questions were framed in such a way as to provide more detailed information on two different aspects of the position of the Secretary-General within their respective administrations: firstly, the provisions regarding the appointment and the functions of the Secretary-General, and secondly the functions and tasks of the Secretary-General regarding the administration of Parliament.

This report, together with the annexed tables, is an initial summary of all the materials submitted, and attempts to suggest a number of points for further debate on the trends that emerged from the questionnaire.

## I. Provisions regarding the appointment and the functions of the Secretary-General

1. In the vast majority of cases Parliaments, whether unicameral or bicameral, are organised with **one Secretary-General for each Chamber**, thereby vesting one single member of the bureaucracy with the power to represent the administration as a whole vis-à-vis the political authorities. The only exceptions are Austria, Fiji, South Africa and the Swiss Federal Assembly which have one Secretary-General for both Chambers. Other exceptions are Nepal, where alongside a single Secretary General responsible for Parliament sitting in joint session and for the parliamentary administration as a whole, there exists a Clerk for each Chamber, as well as France and Uruguay, where each Chamber has two Secretaries-General: one responsible for the legislative services and the other responsible for administrative services (in the case of France this distinction is based on the autonomous power to prepare the budget which is conferred upon the Quaestors directly by a law, which warrants the presence of a *Secrétaire Général de la Questure*, directly answerable to them). Similar solutions are also found elsewhere, in New Zealand for example, even though the General Manager does not formally have Secretary-General status).

The Secretary-General, in most of the models of parliamentary administration surveyed, is therefore the single highest representative of the administration in vis-à-vis the political authorities. The latter lay down the policies and guidelines for the administration through the Secretary-General, who thereby performs a unifying function for the bureaucratic structure which he/she manages according to the guidelines received from the political authorities.

2. An examination of the procedures for **the appointment of the Secretary-General** is essential to an understanding of the exact legal status of the Secretary-General, and helps to better define the status of his/her office with respect to the political authorities. The replies to the questionnaire showed that there are considerable differences in the types of rules which govern the appointment of the Secretary-General; they can be grouped under five main headings: appointment by the Presiding Officer, appointment by the governing collegiate political body, election by Parliament, appointment by a body outside Parliament, or as a result of a public competitive examination for the selection of candidates.

Within the first group, the Presiding Officer, exercising his/her prerogatives, independently appoints the Secretary-General (the Jordanian House of Representatives, the Greek Chamber of Deputies, the Indian Rajya Sabha, Mali, the National Assembly of Namibia, the Russian Federation Council). Sometimes this is done after consultation

with the representatives of both the government majority and the opposition (the Indian Lok Sabha), or within the governing collegiate political body (the Albanian People's Assembly, the Principality of Andorra, the Czech Republic, Congo, Denmark, the German Bundestag, the Israeli Knesset, Madagascar, Niger, the Polish Sejm, the Russian Duma, the Thai Senate). In this case the Presiding Officer may make his/her decision based mainly on his/her own appreciation of and confidence in the candidate, which is absolutely consistent with the role of the Secretary-General as the 'first institutional adviser' to the Speaker.

In the second model, the decision is left directly to the governing collegiate body (Belarus, Fiji, Italy, France, Iceland, Lithuania, the European Parliament, Senegal, the Spanish Senate). Following this appointment procedure, the Secretary-General must not only enjoy the confidence of the Speaker, who normally has the power to nominate the candidate who is his primary institutional aide, but also of the collegiate political body which approves the nomination (mostly composed in such a way as to represent all the parliamentary groups). In this case the appointment procedures favour an impartial role for the Secretary-General, emphasizing the relationship of loyalty that must exist with regard to the Assembly as a whole and hence with all the political parties and groupings represented there.

The third model is very common: a procedure is used in which the appointment of the Secretary-General is discussed and approved by the full House (Belgium, Chile, the Philippines Senate, Luxembourg, Suriname, Sweden, the Uruguay Senate), acting in some cases upon a proposal or with the following endorsement by the Speaker (Korea, the German Bundesrat, Japan, Macedonia, Romania, the National Assembly of Slovenia, South Africa) or else by some other high-level collegiate parliamentary body (Finland, Norway, Swiss Federal Assembly, the Netherlands).

The procedure for appointing the Secretary-General following nomination by a body outside Parliament is another possibility. In these cases, the power of appointment is formally exercised by independent authorities or, in any case, outside Parliament: by the President of the Republic (Indonesia, Sri Lanka), by the Governor General (Australia, House of Commons in Canada, New Zealand), by the Executive (Senate in Canada, House of Representatives in Ireland, Senate in Lesotho), in some cases acting on a proposal of the Presiding Officer or the relevant parliamentary collegiate body. In Nepal the S.G., as well as the Clerks of each Chamber, are appointed by the King, on a proposal of the Presiding Officers of the Houses; in the United Kingdom too the Clerk is appointed by the Crown, acting however on a proposal of the Prime Minister (in the case of the House of Commons, following consultations with the Speaker), even though this does not mean that the Clerk owes his/her loyalty only to the government or to the Parliamentary majority.

Lastly, in very few cases, the Secretary-General may be appointed by public competitive examination. In these cases, the formal power of appointment rests within the Presiding Officer or with a collegiate body (Austria, Estonia), with an ad-hoc committee (Cyprus) or with the Prime Minister (Finland, National Council of Namibia).

3. As far as the type of office of Secretary-General of the legislative assembly is concerned, in all the systems surveyed (except for the Greek Chamber of Deputies and of the Senate of Uruguay), the **function** is mainly **technical-administrative** and not political. It is to be pointed out that the Secretary-General is neutral in relation to the individual political components of the Parliament and is independent of all those who, at any given time, represent the people. This autonomy and impartiality of the Secretary-General as an administrator is not in conflict with his/her role as the main adviser to the Presiding Officer, for whom he/she performs important institutional and procedural advisory functions.

4. As far as the **eligibility conditions** for appointment as Secretary-General of a parliamentary Assembly are concerned, the replies to the questionnaire often indicated that the post is not exclusively reserved to serving parliamentary officials, but for civil servants in general or even outsiders.

In all instances, however, the candidate must be highly competent, with managerial skills, specific professional capabilities, not only in public administration but above all in parliamentary and institutional affairs and matters. In this connection, specialist knowledge of parliamentary law is often required as desirable.

The reason why some countries recruit an outsider as Secretary-General is because, not infrequently, the offices which support the parliamentary Assemblies are, with their own specific features, merely a part of the civil service. The latter is often characterised by a high degree of mobility, such that even parliamentary officials can choose to move to a different branch of the civil service (Principality of Andorra, Austria, Cyprus, the Congo, Estonia, Germany, Jordan, Ireland, Mali, the National Assembly of Namibia, New Zealand, Sweden), in some cases after passing the relevant competitive examination (Australia).

Similarly, in most parliaments, the personnel may change their conditions of employment by taking up temporary external posts. This also applies to parliamentary staff and therefore also to the Secretaries-General who may take temporary office elsewhere in the civil service or with a foreign Parliament or an international organisation, after being released from their duties on secondment. Secondment usually has very rigid time limits, and is only allowed after a given

number of years of service. It is also possible to obtain temporary assignments in the private sector, but in these - quite rare - cases it is only possible to resume the previous post if there is a vacancy (Belarus). There are also cases in which external secondment is prohibited (the Filipino Senate, Israel, the National Assembly of Senegal, South Africa).

5. As far as **incompatibility** between the office of Secretary-General and other public or private posts are concerned, in most instances the Secretary-General is a full-time servant of parliament, and is therefore unable to simultaneously take up other posts which would conflict with his/her institutional duties. Where the powers and duties of the Secretary-General are laid down by a law, the same conditions of incompatibility apply as to all civil servants (Estonia, the German Bundesrat). This means that it is not possible to take paid employment elsewhere, except for academic teaching or publishing. In some systems there is no incompatibility with taking up other posts (the Principality of Andorra, the Congo, Korea, the Jordanian House of Representatives, the Indian Lok Sabha, Indonesia, New Zealand, Romania), while in Namibia, as well as in South Africa, the Secretary-General may also serve as a permanent secretary of a Ministry.

6. A further factor which helps to enhance the independence and neutrality of the Secretary-General is the **length of the term of office**, which is characterised by its stability. For in most of the cases surveyed, the Secretary-General leaves office upon retirement. This means that once appointed, the Secretary-General remains in office until retirement age, which varies between 60 and 70. As a rule, the Secretary-General does not cease from office when a new Parliament is elected or when the House is dissolved early, and it is not necessary to be reconfirmed in office (except in the case of Greece and of the Swiss Federal Assembly).

It is quite common for the office to be held for a specific term (from four to seven years, which may be renewed). Very rarely is the office linked to the term of office of the Presiding Officer (the Principality of Andorra, the Russian Federation Council) or the life of the Parliament (Greece, Luxembourg, the Romanian Senate, the Russian Duma, Suriname, Sweden).

It is possible, however, to revoke the appointment of the Secretary-General at any time following the same procedures used to appoint him (often not formally laid down). In order to prevent the removal of the Secretary-General for contingent reasons, and also for political reasons, the circumstances are often stipulated under which it is possible to revoke the appointment (failure to perform institutional duties, criminal charges or illness preventing the Secretary-General from performing his/her functions); in other cases, before the Bureau can remove

the Secretary-General, a specific qualified majority vote is required (this is the case of the Italian Chamber of Deputies).

However, when there is a very strong bond of confidence between the Secretary-General and the Presiding Officer of the Assembly, (as in the case of the Principality of Andorra, Greece, the Indian Lok Sabha, Mali and the Romanian Chamber of Deputies), the Presiding Officer has very broad discretionary powers to revoke the appointment. There are also cases in which the Secretary-General can be dismissed by resolution of the House (the Filipino Senate, the Chilean Senate, Finland, German Bundesrat, Luxembourg, Macedonia, Sri Lanka, Zambia): the Uruguayan Senate requires a simple majority vote in a secret ballot to remove the Secretary-General. In the United Kingdom the Crown has the power to the Clerk, upon the proposal of the House. In Indonesia, if the Secretary-General is removed from office, the Bureau submits a shortlist of candidates to the President.

7. The provisions laying down **the powers and responsibilities of the Secretary-General** are very closely linked to the institutional autonomy enjoyed by the Houses of Parliament in the various legal systems and the national legal and institutional traditions, which vary widely in terms of the relationship that exists with the political authorities.

Most parliamentary Assemblies, exercising their institutional prerogatives of autonomy and independence of the other branches of government, have their own rules and regulations not only with respect to parliamentary business, but also to the tasks and organisation of the administrative apparatus. The administrative powers of the Secretary-General are generally set out in these rules and in the regulations on the organisation and the functions of parliamentary staff. Further tasks and activities performed by the Secretary-General which are not governed by internal regulations are sanctioned by parliamentary tradition and practice.

In some systems, parliamentary regulations exist side by side with Civil Service Acts (Estonia, the German Bundesrat, the Indian Rajya Sabha, the Lesotho Senate, the Council of the Russian Federation).

In other cases statute law is the only source of regulation governing the powers and responsibilities of the Secretary-General, in the form of *ad hoc* rules for the organisation and operation of Parliament and its administration (Korea, Japan, Israel, New Zealand's House of Representatives, the British House of Lords, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, Zambia), while in others this is governed more generally by civil service legislation (Australia, Jordanian House of Representatives, Namibia).

## II. Functions and tasks in relation to administration

As far as the functions and tasks relating to administration are concerned, the answers to the questionnaire show that there are common features between countries in this regard.

1. Firstly, although the systems and features vary somewhat, in almost every case the Secretary-General is recognised as **representing the administration** of the Assembly.

In principle, by virtue of this function, the Secretary-General represents the Chamber both with respect to contracts, and in courts of law for cases involving the administration.

The actual exercise of this power of representation is generally left to the autonomous responsibility of the Secretary-General. However in some systems other bodies also intervene (for example the Speaker of the Belgian Senate, the Danish Folketing and Japan, or the Quaestors in the French Senate), whereas in others (in Ireland for example) the power of representation is not the sole prerogative of the Secretary-General but is shared with other senior parliamentary officials.

In many instances there are specific internal provisions which distribute the powers to enter into contracts between different officials of the administration, or empower the Secretary-General to delegate specific contractual deeds to other officials.

However, it is rather rare for the power of representation not to be vested in the Secretary-General directly by law or regulations, requiring instead a specific *ad hoc* delegation of powers by the Presiding Officer (Madagascar), or by a governing collegiate body (the Belgian House of Representatives, Luxembourg).

Two very specific cases are Mali, where the Secretary-General may represent the administration for particular ceremonies but not appear in court or sign contracts, and Sweden, whose Secretary-General is vested with quite limited powers of representation because the administrative services are carried out by a different agency altogether.

A distinction must be drawn between the representation of the parliamentary administration and the power of general representation of Parliament, as a constitutional body. Such power of general representation is related to constitutional functions (for example in relations between Parliament and other constitutional bodies) and is generally vested in the Presiding Officer and not in the Secretary-General.

2. A second set of powers and responsibilities of the Secretary-General has to do with the **organisation of the administration**.

The Secretary-General normally has a certain degree of discretion when deciding on the organisation of the administration which he/she heads. The ways in which these powers are exercised, nevertheless, vary widely from one country to another.

In most cases (for example the Finnish *Eduskunta*, the French National Assembly and Senate, the Greek Chamber of Deputies, the Althingi of Iceland, the National Assembly of Niger, the Storting of Norway, the Council of the Russian Federation, and the National Assembly of Senegal) the Secretary-General has a general power to submit proposals to the governing political bodies or relevant political Committees, which are responsible for the final decision, especially on important matters. It follows from this that designing the organisational scheme of the administrative apparatus is a complex task which has to take account of the will of different entities, one political, and the other - the Secretary-General - bureaucratic, who in has, in any case, some relevant competencies.

In other systems, the task of organising the administration is the direct responsibility of the Secretary-General, even though political bodies are generally associated to the exercise of this function which, depending upon circumstances, are vested with powers to direct, control or merely supervise (as in the case of Australia, Austria, the Belgian Senate, Canada, the Chilean Senate, Korea, Denmark, the Filipino Senate, the Spanish Senate and South Africa).

At all events, one can safely say that apart from the different ways in which the Secretary-General acts, he/she often has a decisive influence on defining the structure of the administrative apparatus of the legislative bodies.

3. As far as the question of the **accountability** of the Secretary-General is concerned, here again there are different organisational models depending upon the wide range of different political and institutional systems surveyed.

The first thing to note is that the Secretary-General is generally accountable to the political bodies governing the parliamentary institution.

This relationship of accountability is defined differently in legal and formal terms in the various systems examined.

In some cases the Secretary-General is accountable for his work directly to the Presiding Officer of the Assembly (Italy, the Principality of Andorra, Austria, Greece, the Indian Lok Sabha, Iceland, Mali, German *Bundestag*, South Africa).

In other instances, the Secretary-General may be accountable to varying degrees also to the Bureau (as in Albania, the Belgian House of Representatives, Belarus, Denmark, Estonia, Norway, the second Chamber of the States General of the Netherlands, the Romanian Senate and Chamber of Deputies, and the Council of the Russian Federation)

or to specific committees (in the Australian Senate, Cyprus, the National Assembly of Namibia, the first Chamber of the States General of the Netherlands, the British House of Commons and House of Lords, and the Swiss Federal Assembly) which are responsible for specific sectors of the administration (above all for financial and personnel management).

4. It is because of the number, the importance and the complexity of the tasks and powers of the Secretary-General that, in the majority of the systems surveyed, the Secretary-General is assisted by one or more senior officials vested with **deputising powers**.

In most cases they are fully-fledged Deputy Secretaries-General appointed following identical or similar procedures to those used for appointing the Secretary-General himself, varying in number but always between one and four. Less often they are appointed following specific ad hoc procedures giving the Secretary-General rather wide margins of discretion in making the final choice.

Other systems, that do not officially have a deputy Secretary-General, generally vest the deputising functions in the Directors-General or Heads of departments (Denmark, France, the Greek Chamber of Deputies, the second Chamber of the States General of the Netherlands, House of Commons of the UK), the Heads of division (the German Bundestag, Ireland, the Senate of the Czech Republic, South Africa), the Head of the Office (*chef de cabinet*) of the President (Chamber of Deputies of the Czech Republic) or the Heads of department with specific experience and seniority.

Normally each Deputy Secretary-General or senior official vested with deputizing functions are given one specific area of authority with a varying range of powers in respect of which they are accountable to the Secretary-General or, less commonly, directly to the political organs that appointed them.

The appointment of one or two Deputy Secretaries-General is clearly due to the need to decentralise: by relieving the Secretary-General of most of the sectoral coordination duties through an appropriate system for delegating authority, the Secretary-General can perform his/her own specific function better and more efficiently. It is not a purely direct administrative function, but above all it involves managing and co-ordinating the activities of the whole apparatus, as well as organisational and planning responsibilities.

Similar needs are met by the frequent use in many of the countries surveyed of organisational models that highlight the role of the senior officials who are generally personally responsible for the performance of the areas which they head, and are directly accountable for them to the appointing authority. They are therefore mostly accountable to the Secretary-General. They often play equivalent

roles, in practice, if not from a formal viewpoint, to that of Deputy Secretaries-General.

The Secretary-General is, however, normally vested with the power to take upon him/herself, supervise and coordinate the activities of senior officials.

5. In addition to the functions and the responsibilities described above, the Secretary-General normally has **personnel management** responsibilities. But here again there are significant differences between countries: in some cases, the Secretary-General has autonomous powers, and may recruit and dismiss, while in other cases the powers are limited only to the lower echelons, or he/she may only make proposals to the political authorities.

The Secretary-General is frequently empowered to appoint, assign and dismiss personnel. In some cases, with respect to senior officials, these powers are performed acting on the basis of powers delegated from or in agreement with the Presiding Officer, or with specific committees for the purpose of supervising personnel management.

The Secretary-General, as the highest official in the whole administrative apparatus, also has – to a varying degree - disciplinary powers, and may impose sanctions and penalties. Such penalties may usually be appealed before the courts or special internal bodies, or the political authorities. Here again, the differences that exist between one country and another impinge upon the breadth of the autonomy of the Secretary-General.

Except in exceptional cases (Fiji, the French National Assembly, the Thai Senate), the Secretary-General does not have specific powers over non-parliamentary staff, including those employed by the office of the President. In some cases, however, the staff of the office of the President are also required to comply with specific rules of conduct, over which the Secretary-General has monitoring powers (the Israeli Knesset). This being so, while retaining the specific legal conditions governing the employment of each individual, it is possible to guarantee the necessary uniformity of conduct and the effective observance of the same core of rules of professional conduct on the part of everyone involved, in one way or another, in assuring the efficient working of Parliament.

6. With regard to **financial management**, there are significant variations in the role of the Secretary-General in different countries.

The replies to the questionnaire show, for example, that there are widely differing procedural models regarding the budget. In some cases, which are by no means rare (compare for example the Danish *Folketing*, the Estonian *Riigikogu*, the Filipino Senate, the Greek Chamber of Deputies, the Indonesian House of Representatives, in

Iceland, in Namibia, the first Chamber of the States-General of the Netherlands, the British House of Lords, the Romanian Chamber of Deputies, the Suriname National Assembly, the Thai Senate and the Zambian National Assembly) the Secretary-General is responsible for producing the budget or a draft budget.

In other systems the Secretary-General merely assists and makes budgetary proposals which the House itself or other political bodies are responsible for adopting.

The day-to-day financial management of Parliament is always entrusted to the parliamentary administration, and in most cases to the Secretary-General or to senior officials over which the Secretary-General has supervisory authority.

There are also considerable differences regarding the control of expenditure and the availability of own resources.

With regard to **expenditure control**, despite the great differences that exist between the different systems, we can say that where no specific internal or external auditing body exists, it is the Secretary-General who normally holds the responsibility for ensuring that expenditure matches the availability of budgeted funds. The Secretary-General is often required to produce a report on the accounts at the end of the year.

Not all the Parliaments surveyed have their **own resources**, but in those which do there are wide variations in the amounts and in the way they are managed.

7. With regard to **public relations**, the role of the Secretary-General usually appears to be quite prominent.

There is also a widespread practice of giving the Secretary-General powers regarding communication and the image of the administration, through the use *inter alia* of the latest computerised tools.

Generally speaking, press releases are drawn up and disseminated under his/her responsibility, as is any other document or other information issued to the public or to the press or to the broadcasting agencies.

In some countries, the Assembly has a spokesperson for these activities, employed by the administration, and directly accountable to the Secretary-General (Estonia, Germany, House of Commons of the UK, the Irish Senate, Israel, the Italian Chamber of Deputies, the Namibian National Assembly, the Netherlands, the Russian Duma, the Slovenian National Assembly, Switzerland). In the Romanian Senate the Secretary-General is also the spokesperson of the Assembly. Other countries also have a spokesperson for the Presiding Officer, separate from the former and forming part of the external personnel of the administration.

8. One particularly important role played by the Secretary-General has to do with the sensitive issues of **security** of people and property and **maintaining order** within the parliamentary precincts.

For it is often the Secretary-General himself who is responsible, as the organiser, coordinator or supervisor, for the adoption of all the measures that are necessary to ensure that parliamentary business is conducted in a safe and secure place, shielded from any internal or external interference that may cause disruptions.

Nevertheless, there are also cases in which this function is left to the Presiding Officer or -- in the case of security and order within the Chamber -- to the Questors, or to some specific committee acting on behalf of and representing the whole House.

It is therefore obvious that in view of their importance and sensitivity, responsibility over these matters is always vested in the higher levels of authority, whether political or bureaucratic.

9. Very similar solutions have also been adopted regarding the **safety at work of employees**, and the protection of the parliamentarians' and parliamentary employees' personal data.

With regard to the former, it is generally the Secretary-General who is responsible for ensuring that accident and occupational disease prevention programmes are put into place.

The **protection of personal data**, where this is governed by law, is normally the responsibility of the Secretary-General, while the Presiding Officer usually has guarantor's functions not unlike those of the relevant authorities that exist in many systems.

### III. Conclusions

A comparative analysis of the replies to the questionnaire highlights a number of features that define the status of the Secretary-General of a Legislative Assembly today.

The most significant aspect is the way in which the tasks and responsibilities that the Secretary-General have evolved. In addition to being the adviser to the Presiding Officer on procedural and institutional matters, he is also vested today with management duties relating to the steering and running of the administrative services. In other words, the Secretary-General is increasingly being required not only to be an adviser on legal and procedural matters, but also to undertake duties

of relevance to the organisation and innovation of the complex administrative system supporting parliamentary business.

More specifically, the administrative and managerial aspects in virtually all the parliaments under examination in which the Secretary-General is involved are to represent the parliamentary administration (both with respect to contracts and judicial matters), organise the departments and offices, manage financial affairs and personnel, handle external relations, and lay down security measures.

The Secretary-General is therefore increasingly being required to possess skills for which his "technical" contribution can no longer be limited merely to providing advice to the political authorities, but is merging into the overall activities of the management the administration as a whole.

It should be noted that this change in the role of the Secretary-General is taking place as parliamentary administrations move towards more complex and modern ways of supporting the institutional work of parliaments. This is a particularly significant development when seen in terms of more widely ranging phenomena which involve all the parliaments in every country, to varying degrees. Modernisation, the globalisation of politics and markets, the increasing scope for regulatory action, and also the development of innovative computerised information systems (one only has to think of the revolution that has occurred with the exchange of information through the Internet) require the administrations of parliaments to make an enormous effort to adjust in organisational and technological terms. In addition to this, international relations and inter-parliamentary cooperation are increasing, and faster and more flexible systems for data and information collection are being used, consultancy services and fact-finding inputs are being used more extensively and in many different fields, and appropriate technical and computerised support is now available to assist parliamentary business.

This new environment demands organisational and management skills on the part of the Secretary-General to ensure the greatest efficiency and effectiveness of the administrative structures. However, this does not mean that corporate management skills and responsibilities are becoming predominant over his/her institutional character. The particular technical nature and the public duties entrusted to parliamentary administrations are changing the meaning of the criteria used to gauge efficiency and productivity, which are only possible by integrating them with the principle of institutional service, which must be a constant feature in all the work of the administrative structure.

The broadening of the managerial powers of the Secretary-General - partly because of the greater impact of the organisational decisions on parliamentary business - does not therefore clash with his/her function as adviser on legal and

procedural matters, but if anything enhances his role still further. In this connection, the advisory and technical/legal support functions have significantly evolved because of the increasing importance of the tasks connected with the scheduling and planning of parliamentary business and institutional communication activities.

This is borne out by the fact that in all the experiences examined, whatever the legal solutions that are adopted in individual systems, it is evidently necessary to ensure consistency between the work of the political governing bodies of the Legislative Assemblies and the administrative structures, whatever organisational model may be used. It is in the search for this consistency and harmony, in the positive cooperation aimed at creating conditions which will guarantee the most efficient operation of the body which represents national sovereignty, and in the strict impartiality required of the Secretary-General that lies the specific responsibility of the Secretary-General; herein is also based the sphere of autonomy which different parliamentary systems give the Secretary-General to varying degrees, and hence to the administrations which support them.