

## ***V. Appropriate Responses to Complaints from Employees***

### **1. Trends in Cases Submitted to Equity Process**

Among the cases submitted to equity process in FY 2006, the number of objections filed in relation to adverse actions increased to 106 from 70–80 cases in recent years. The increase in the number of objections is attributed to a substantial increase to 57 objections received in relation to change in status. The number of such objections had been around 10 in recent years. Meanwhile, the number of objections received in relation to disciplinary action, which had conventionally accounted for the major part of objections, was 29 in FY 2006, which is smaller in number than previous years. As a result, the total number of objections filed in relation to change in status such as demotion, dismissal, suspension of employment (including renewal of suspension period) accounted for about 50% in all objections received.

Among the cases filed for equity process, the number of claims for investigations filed in relation to provision of accident compensation also increased substantially to 59 in FY 2006 from 20-plus claims in the past years. This is partly because, this year again, there were a large number of claims seeking the accreditation of mental disorders including depression as accidents resulting from the performance of duties.

As noted above, the number of objections submitted to equity process is increasing. The equity process system is designed to protect employees' interests and secure appropriate management of personnel administration by allowing the NPA to disaffirm illegal or unreasonable actions. In this regard, the NPA needs to handle these cases as promptly and appropriately as possible. The NPA is setting goals for handling cases and utilizing centralized procedures actively in its efforts in order to fulfill this need.

## **2. Responding to Complaint Counseling**

In such circumstances as the increase in the complexity and sophistication of public administration and substantial change in the environment surrounding public employees, a large number of requests for complaint counseling have been received from employees in recent years. In addition to counseling related to appointments such as changes of assignment and transfers and counseling related to working conditions including remuneration and working hours, other complex complaint counseling related to bullying, abuse, power harassment, and sexual harassment, which are resulted from human relationships and difficult to resolve, is increasing.

In order to handle these diverse complaints from employees promptly and appropriately, it is necessary to improve the complaint counseling system in close collaboration with the Cabinet Office and Ministries. To fulfill this need, the NPA holds the "Liaison Conference concerning Complaint Counseling" and the "Training Course for Officers at the Office and Ministries in Charge of Complaint Counseling" at its headquarters and regional offices. With the aim of improving employees' access to complaint counseling, the NPA accepts complaint counseling through e-mail and sets up a "Saturday Counseling Room" twice a month.

In addition, the NPA is making further efforts to establish an effective counseling system by analyzing previous complaints and reviewing the method of factual investigation.