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REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL, IN COOPERATION WITH THE HEADQUARTERS COMMITTEE, ON MANAGING THE UNESCO COMPLEX

COMMENTS BY THE UNESCO STAFF UNION (STU)

Pursuant to Item 9.2 of the UNESCO Administrative Manual, the UNESCO Staff Union (STU) submits its comments on this report by the Director-General.

1. STU expresses its serious concern regarding several aspects of document 192 EX/28.

2. Firstly, **the plan for more efficient use of available office space** (paragraphs 42 and 47) proposed by the Director-General aims to make savings for the Organization. However, STU wonders about (i) its feasibility in regard to its effects on the staff's working conditions (the staff of two sectors – the Natural Sciences Sector and the Social and Human Sciences Sector – are cut off from the remainder of the Organization, as are the permanent delegations) and (ii) the reality of the savings made. A **budget of €1.2 million has been allocated in the form of an advance from the Headquarters Utilization Fund** (HQF) to carry out refurbishment and removal operations when there is at present no guarantee that the buildings might be rented out and thus that the funds advanced will be reimbursed. Indeed, besides the permanent delegations and non-governmental organizations, **the buildings can only be rented to intergovernmental organizations and United Nations agencies, which considerably reduces the number of effective rental options and thus the cost-effectiveness** of the plan for more efficient use of available office space. Moreover, no figure has been provided to the Executive Board concerning the savings an operation of this kind should generate, in particular by the rental of the freed space. To date, the premises that have been vacated are still empty and the condition of the premises, in particular Building VI (Bonvin), continues to deteriorate, which can only reduce potential tenants' interest in them.

3. Concerning the deterioration of the premises, STU expresses its profound concern as to the level of resources which, as stated in paragraph 4 of document 192 EX/28, "is below the critical threshold" and which "does not provide for any refurbishment, creates an 'operate to fail' environment and as such a deterioration affecting the safety of the UNESCO buildings not yet under renovation". What potential tenant could be interested in these premises?

4. While a failure to renovate the premises necessarily creates security problems, STU is more concerned than ever by the insufficient number of security staff. **The safety of the staff and of the permanent delegations is threatened by this**. In paragraph 19 of the aforementioned document, it is stated that “it was not possible to implement in full the measures put forward in the Medium-Term Security Plan, particularly as regards increasing fire safety staff following the freezing of posts during the past two years, which prevents compliance with safety standards set by the H-MOSS requirements and the laws and regulations of the host country and the United Nations fire safety policy.” STU sounds the alarm in regard to the failure to comply with the **host State’s safety standards**, which lays heavy responsibilities on that State and on Member States and the Administration which have made the decisions.

5. Possible failures also involve defective and obsolete equipment. There was a 57% reduction in the budget for the maintenance and conservation of Headquarters buildings, “leaving provision for executing only indispensable tasks relating to staff safety, health and security” (paragraph 3 of document 192 EX/28). STU therefore appeals yet again to Member States and to the Administration, on account of the liability to be borne in the event of a serious incident, to allocate sufficient resources to provide for the safety of the staff and of members of delegations at the Fontenoy and Miollis/Bonvin sites.

6. It is important to remember that during the **Commissary**’s General Assembly, held on 16 November 2012, a majority of participants requested that the membership cards be distributed again, to allow users to vote, and that the management committee be reactivated. The management committee had indeed been dissolved in 2004, at the Commissary’s last General Assembly, and since then, the Commissary had been managed by the Organization’s administrative directorate (MSS) under the authority of the Director General. The management by MSS had been strongly criticized since 2004 because the policy lines adopted had aimed at depriving the staff of their rights.

7. Following the General Assembly of 16 November 2012, a working group was formed at a meeting held on 5 December 2012 to work on the Commissary’s terms of membership and discuss the main items of the agenda of the General Assembly of 29 April 2013. The working group requested that reactivation of the management committee be discussed in the General Assembly and that a feasibility study be envisaged by the management committee to review the range of products available according to the needs of beneficiaries and boost the sales of leading products.

8. Since its establishment on 25 June 2013, the management committee has set to work actively and developed a feasibility study in cooperation with the Administration on the review of product categories, communication with staff on product offers and the Commissary’s placement at the Bonvin and Fontenoy sites. It should be noted that since the Commissary at Fontenoy is too small to meet the demand of a growing number of users, it is rapidly becoming essential to look into expanding the retail space at Fontenoy to promote growth and service offers for staff, while maintaining an active branch at Bonvin.

9. The management committee is examining and carefully following the recommendations of the External Auditor (document 190 EX/INF.9 pages 77-79) while respecting the cooperative framework of the Commissary. It should be noted that the financial situation is not as disastrous as predicted, taking into account the profits made on the sale of cigarettes in early 2013 and the recovery in orders of certain leading products such as perfume.