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Item 28 of the provisional agenda

REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL ON THE REFORM OF THE FIELD NETWORK

ADDENDUM

COMMENTS OF THE UNESCO STAFF UNION (STU)

SUMMARY

In conformity with item 2805.7 of the UNESCO Administrative Manual, the UNESCO Staff Union (STU) submits its observations on this report by the Director-General.

As specified in point 14 of document 186 EX/28, Member States underlined the importance of clear policy guidelines for human resources management issues and that the field reform should be aligned with the Organization's overall reform of human resources management.

However, STU has repeatedly pointed to serious shortcomings in the Staff Rotation Policy that have to be addressed with regard to the management of human resources before embarking on organizational re-engineering at large scale. STU is worried that the proposal of the new structure and steps to implement the reform only loosely point to the accompanying human resource strategy. Nor are the relevant measures, calendar of their implementation and relevant costs specified anywhere.

As a matter of fact, only the financial and staff compensation package of the implementation of the field network is today in place, but no integrated staff management tool exists today that allows to assess the staff needs, the profiles and competencies for each field office. As pointed out in the External Audit report on the recruitment and end-of-service procedures at UNESCO (186 EX/30 Part IV) "HRM did not have any real staff planning tools for the medium and long terms. No framework documents for provisional management of staff and competencies were presented. The only overview provided was that of planned retirements. A number of key elements of provisional management were inadequately identified: restructuration of divisions, contract extensions, sector needs". This situation is alarming! No real reorientation of UNESCO's delivery capacity in the field will be possible without addressing this issue first.

Further considerations have to be addressed in order to guarantee the success of the reform:

A Staff Rotation Policy can be meaningfully designed and implemented only on the condition that decisions on concerned staff are taken in a transparent manner. This entails not only a transparent information mechanism on rotation opportunities but also a centralized management of human resources, including recruitment and career development that ensures equal opportunities to all UNESCO staff. The current practice of entirely decentralizing human resources management to Sectors results in biased and opaque decisions that would jeopardize the success of the revised Rotation Policy. A “Committee on Staff Rotation” recommended by the External Auditor which will include representatives of Programme Sectors, Central Services (in particular, HRM), and staff representatives should be the first step towards such centralized management. Only if such a measure is observed can staff in all duty stations be treated in an equitable way and have similar opportunities to change duty station.

The STU is further concerned by the announcement that decentralization will be accompanied by a large delegation of responsibility with commensurate accountabilities and will be supported by a new performance management system. Today, these essential elements of the human resources management have not been prepared. As a matter of fact, the existing system of performance evaluation that relies on the very subjective reporting to the direct superior alone would have to be completely revamped.

The STU wishes to reiterate its concerns on the fate reserved to those employees at NPO and L level whose contract will be terminated in the case of office closures. There exists no plan specifying who would be concerned and potentially become redundant. The STU fears that the Administration will deal with this issue in a piecemeal fashion. Instead it will be necessary to bring in competencies in outplacement to respond to the vested interest of the concerned persons and their families.

Finally, the STU regrets that the detailed consultations with Major Programmes to review how the developing field structure can best be used for effective programme delivery in the 2012-2013 biennium and beyond will only start after the 186th session of the Executive Board. Such alignment should have been part and parcel of draft document 36 C/5.