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**FOLLOW-UP TO DECISIONS AND RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED BY THE EXECUTIVE BOARD
AND THE GENERAL CONFERENCE AT THEIR PREVIOUS SESSIONS**

PART IV

HUMAN RESOURCES ISSUES

ADDENDUM

COMMENTS BY THE UNESCO STAFF UNION (STU)

SUMMARY

A. Use of contracts for non-staff personnel, including those for consultants, over the period 2021-2022

Pursuant to Item 9.2.E.7 of the UNESCO Human Resources Manual, the UNESCO Staff Union (STU) submits its comments on the report by the Director-General.

1. Before commenting on document 217 EX/4.IV.A, STU finds it necessary to recall that UNESCO's staff is made up of international civil servants, and that UNESCO is among the 16 organizations that have accepted the statute of the International Civil Service Commission and, together with the United Nations itself and its funds and programmes, participates in the United Nations common system of salaries and allowances.

2. STU would also like to recall that the Standards of Conduct of the International Civil Service clearly indicate that the international civil service bears responsibility for translating the United Nations ideals into reality.



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3. UNESCO's staff are international civil servants.

4. In light of the above, STU notes the fact that the term "non-staff" will no longer be used to designate what constitutes today more than 50% of the workforce of UNESCO, its "affiliate personnel" including individual consultants, service contracts and short-term contract holders.

5. The report stresses in several parts that affiliate contractual modalities allow for more flexibility in programme delivery, at a lower cost for the Organization, which makes them more financially attractive for programme managers and donors. It also presents as a positive highlight and trends the fact that the spending on the affiliate workforce (all types of contracts) has decreased by 7% between 2021 and 2022. Is the use of these affiliate contractual modalities (in particular consultancies and service contracts) really less expensive for the organization? These modalities imply, by definition, a higher turn-over of personnel, with several consequences deriving from their management and supervision that should also be considered in financial terms:

- The recruitment of personnel is a time-consuming process which involves not only HRM but also the Administration, Sectors and Offices;
- The necessary learning curve of newly appointed affiliate personnel, requiring support and guidance from supervisors and other colleagues, to reach the expected quality standards, required to support the work of the international civil service.

6. In particular, this question should be raised in the context of the Field Reform under course, which is aimed to reinforce UNESCO's efficiency and capacity to deliver on the ground. Can such a reform be sustainable when relying so massively (for 73%) on a workforce with contractual arrangements of a temporary nature?

7. Furthermore, in regard to their important contribution to the delivery of UNESCO's programme, STU wonders why category 1 institutes and the UBO are excluded from the global statistics considered in document 217 EX/4.IV.A. While partial data are provided for UBO in Annex II, statistics concerning category 1 institutes, which employ 16% of UNESCO's workforce, should also be considered in order to provide a complete overview of the use of contracts for affiliate personnel and to ensure accountability and adherence to the same standards and rules.

8. Considering that Service Contract holders represent 24% of UNESCO's workforce (35% in the Field), and often cover functions similar to those covered by fixed-term staff members (addressing administrative, IT, programme support, and project assistance needs), STU warmly welcomes the enhancement of conditions of service for the Service Contract holders. This reform, which came into force as of January 2023, enhances various contractual aspects, in terms of remuneration structure and benefits (paternity leave, enhanced sick leave entitlement, possibility of requesting a salary advance, introduction of danger allowance, exceptional special leave without pay, part-time employment, end-of-service grant, and a revised salary structure), contributing to reduce inequalities among staff.

9. STU welcomes these improvements and is proud of its contribution to make it happen. STU is looking forward to continuing its dialogue and collaboration with the Administration to achieve further improvement of the work conditions for our affiliate colleagues, in particular Service Contract holders in the Field, who are in urgent need of adequate social security and healthcare coverage.

10. In this regard, STU welcomes the efforts of the Organization in exploring the provision of a global medical scheme for field-based Service Contract holders.

11. STU remains concerned, however, about the perpetuation of the different treatment of service contracts at Headquarters and in the Field as regards the length of assignment. According to Annex II, Table 6, Service Contract holders with more than 5 years of uninterrupted service with the Organization are 29% of the total, all in the Field. Such a duration is in evident contradiction with the

temporary nature of this contractual arrangement, in particular when, in the duration, Service Contract holders are progressively asked to cover core functions.

12. That is why STU will continue to ask for the regularization of this dedicated Service Contract personnel to regular posts, for a better monitoring of the situation, and for such a practice to be discontinued in the future.

13. Representing 24% of the total workforce, the STU notes that the report indicates that “the majority of individual consultant contracts are concluded for periods of less than three months”, but the report does not provide data on renewal or re-employment of such short-term consultancy contracts. Such data would provide a better picture on the correct use of this contractual modality.

14. Paragraph 8 indicates that “affiliate personnel do not have access to the internal justice mechanisms but can resort to alternative recourse mechanisms for the settlement of disputes”. STU would like to highlight that such mechanisms are often inadequate, especially when it comes to very short-term contracts, for which these recourses are de-facto conducted after the conclusion of the contract. STU would very much welcome detailed statistics in this regard.

15. Finally, the STU awaits the system-wide report of the Joint Inspection Unit on the use of non-staff personnel and related contractual modalities in the United Nations system.