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REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL ON THE REFORM PROCESS

PART I

STAFF POLICY

SUMMARY

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

Introduction

1. The UNESCO Staff Union (STU) wishes to state at the outset that reform at UNESCO is taking place **in opposition to** the staff and using practices that sideline the staff from decisions concerning their working conditions. As a result, the “new policies” are merely theoretical constructions, which may be of high quality but cannot be applied on an everyday basis in the Secretariat.

2. With regard to the report submitted to the Executive Board, STU recalls that at the 171st session of the Executive Board and the 33rd session of the General Conference, staff representatives stressed the particularly low level of staff morale and the need to improve internal communication in the Secretariat and to establish genuine mechanisms for negotiation. STU’s analysis of the situation is that human resources management policies should not continue to be dictated *ex cathedra* but must take due account of the particular characteristics and needs of UNESCO staff members.

Consulting staff representatives

3. There are at present two consultative mechanisms: the Advisory Council on Personnel Policies (ACPP) and regular contact with the two staff associations.

4. More than a year ago, ACPP made recommendations on how to improve its own functioning which were to be transmitted to the Director-General by the Bureau of Human Resources Management (HRM). To date, no information about the Director-General’s reaction to these recommendations has been received, either by the members of the Council or by the representative staff associations and, of course, no improvement has been made to the working of ACPP.

5. STU, which has observer status with ACPP, has noted over more than three years that the Council is not very effective, since it is chaired by the Director of Human Resources (HRM) who – as she readily admits – is judge and party in the preparation and examination of policies applicable to staff management. The Council was originally designed to make proposals to the Director-General in the matter of staff policies. Since the present Director-General reactivated the Council, HRM has decided on a working method that has never been approved either by the staff associations, or by the elected or appointed Council members. Thus, HRM formulates texts which are submitted to the College of Assistant Directors-General and only asks ACPP to make corrections of form. The Council members have had to be quite persistent in order to ensure that relatively important adjustments were made to certain texts, but the spirit of each policy is unfortunately defined well before ACPP gets down to work. Consequently, whilst paying tribute to Council members, both those who are elected and those appointed by the Director-General, STU can only note the Council’s ineffectiveness, the consequence of its extremely limited room for manoeuvre.

6. At the December brainstorming meeting referred to in the document prepared by HRM – an extramural meeting in a first-class residence in the Paris region – the opinion of the STU observer (like that of certain members, moreover) was not taken into account and a methodology to bypass the usual procedures was decided on by HRM. If that is how things are done, STU wonders whether it should continue to sanction what passes for consultation.

7. At the same time, STU has been expressing satisfaction over the last year at the noticeable improvement in relations with HRM and the Deputy Director-General. Thus, the relations of the STU Executive Committee with Mr Barbosa are excellent. However, the scale of the problem is

such (number and seriousness of conflicts in the Secretariat) that monthly meetings are not enough to find solutions to ongoing questions and to agree on a future approach.

8. Likewise, relations with the Director of HRM and her Deputy could not be more cordial, but – despite all the goodwill of the members of the Executive Committee – recent attempts to solve individual problems have come up against an attitude that, although it remains inexplicable, seems to be deep-rooted in HRM and elsewhere (for example, ADM), an attitude according to which our association should only intervene in the life of the staff as a last resort, whereas STU's main preoccupation is to prevent conflict or to stop it as soon as possible.

9. Given that STU is not allowed to play fully its role of mediation, that colleagues are constantly being rebuked for approaching us and that the Administration has an opaque policy for dealing with individual matters, according to the nationality and personal relations of the person concerned, the widespread discontent in the Secretariat should come as no surprise.

10. Concerning general questions of staff policy, despite the particularly attentive attitude of the Deputy Director-General which we benefit from about once a month, STU has the impression that it does not take part in decisions concerning our working and, ultimately, our living conditions. This may be explained by the fact that current procedures do not involve genuine negotiation in the Secretariat.

Staff numbers and recruitment

11. The relatively new recruitment policy (integrated policy on recruitment, rotation and promotion) should in theory make for more rigorous and transparent staff management and recruitment. However, the procedures are vitiated by the “let's pretend” approach of Sectors and Bureaux which is sanctioned by HRM. The staff associations regularly draw attention to many irregularities, but their work as observers in the recruitment and redeployment process is often to no avail owing to HRM's policy of keeping up appearances instead of scrupulously observing the rules.

12. It is to be hoped that the new Advisory Boards for Individual Personnel Matters (PAB) will be able to work better, but without a clearly affirmed resolve on the part of HRM to respect procedures, the room for manoeuvre of the new members of the Boards will still be too limited.

13. HRM did announce the launch of a global recruitment exercise which has resulted in the advertising of some 60 posts due to fall vacant this biennium. The principle underlying the procedure is an excellent one, especially in a normal setting for the management of staff and the individual careers of staff members. At present, however, the UNESCO Secretariat is in the middle of a vital restructuring process. If the process is to be carried out transparently, the new structures (even if they are only prospective) should be defined well before starting recruitment. Otherwise, recruitment will take place, internally as well as externally, on the basis of structures which are very much under review. The only sector that seems to be applying this common-sense principle is the Education Sector which has refused to display any post vacancy notices until the restructuring project has been clearly defined. STU would like to see that principle applied to the Secretariat as a whole – recruitment should be halted during restructuring: the restructuring exercise and the redeployment that will inevitably ensue should be transparent and take place with the participation of the staff associations.

Rotation

14. During the discussion in ACPP of the draft rotation policy imposed by HRM, STU expressed its disagreement with the text and warned that it would be impossible to apply. The idea of greater mobility of staff between Headquarters and the Organization's field offices can be easily justified and may even be considered useful for the smooth running of the Secretariat. However, beyond the personal problems inherent in a career spanning several meridians, staff rotation at UNESCO should above all take account of the highly diversified professional profiles due to the Organization's very varied fields of competence.

15. HRM should admit that the rotation policy it has proposed has failed and should try to devise another philosophy of staff rotation and of career development. Just as HRM asserts that career development simply means a greater number of duty stations, so STU considers that the concept of merit promotion should be given recognition and integrated into staff rotation. Improved recruitment – more transparent, based on new criteria geared to staff rotation – a more informal style of evaluation and genuine staff training should contribute to a more versatile staff, ready to change duty stations more often.

16. STU urges the representatives of Member States to pay more attention to the management of the staff: the future of the Organization depends on it.