



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

**Executive Board**  
Hundred and seventy-sixth session

**176 EX/6**  
Part I Add.

PARIS, 11 April 2007  
Original: French

Item 6 of the provisional agenda

**REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL  
ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE REFORM PROCESS**

**PART I**  
**STAFF POLICY**  
**ADDENDUM**

**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) has constantly reminded the Executive Board about the non-participatory form of governance practiced by the Director-General through his representatives. For instance, in document 174 EX/6 Part 1 Add., STU already considered it important to state 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. For many years now, but above all during the 33rd session of the General Conference and all subsequent sessions of the Executive Board, STU has drawn the attention of Member States to the particularly low level of morale, not to say discouragement, of UNESCO staff and the total absence of effective negotiating mechanisms. We have also expressed our desire for genuine internal communication and effective participation in the prior analysis and formulation of solutions that might be envisaged as part of the reform process.

3. At the end of document 174 EX/6 Part 1 Add., we urged the representatives of Member States “to pay more attention to the management of the staff” as “the future of the Organization depends on it”. Since then, the situation has only got worse and to date STU has had no reaction, either from the Director-General, or from the Member States.

### **I. Review of the medium and long-term staffing strategy**

4. In his report, the Director-General refers to the “axis of action [which] aims at the concentration of staff resources on UNESCO's principal priority-related programmes” and reviews the Sectors where, in his opinion, progress has been made. The first example is the most unfortunate, because the restructuring of the Education Sector turns out to have been accomplished on the basis of work done by a consultant with no expertise in the matter. STU and the International Staff Association of UNESCO (ISAU) have continually denounced the situation in the Sector and worked together to avoid the worst. STU had already drawn the attention of the Director-General and his representatives, and that of the Executive Board (175 EX/6 Add.), to the fact that the “staff in the Education Sector were surprised at the restructuring solution adopted by external consultants and the sector's senior managers. The structural logic, in relation to the programme approved by the General Conference and the Organization's mission in the area of education, remains very unclear to the staff”. Almost one year later, the staff are still disconcerted and surprised by the fact that the Director-General has taken no steps to verify the rationale for restructuring the Sector, despite the public revelations of the audit conducted by the External Auditor.

5. At a recent meeting between the Director-General and the staff of the Education Sector, the comments by the staff were interpreted as being evidence of a wish to maintain the status quo, fear of change and attachment to an “old House culture”. The Education Sector staff, like the Secretariat as a whole, are motivated by the desire to serve the interests of the Organization as best they can and to fulfil the mandate conferred upon them. Yet who is more familiar than the staff with the operating flaws of a structure as ponderous and cumbersome as that of the Education Sector?

6. In his report, the Director-General highlights the fact that the restructuring has reduced the number of divisions from six to four. This may seem to be an achievement, but is actually irrational disorder and a waste of human resources. Of course, the staff should have their say in the rationalization of the current structure, but it is not up to us to conduct a constructive analysis of the relevance of the reform, in particular regarding effectiveness in the area of the implementation of the Sector's mandate.

7. Unlike the reform of the Education Sector, the restructuring of the Culture Sector is being carried out using internal expertise. All the Sector's staff were invited to take part in the analysis of the Sector's situation and needs for improvement and they were given the opportunity to make specific proposals for reform. The restructuring of the Sector on this basis is not intended to be perfect, or definitive, which demonstrates a degree of professionalism and realism.

8. With regard to the Communication and Information Sector, the staff consider that the main failing in governance is precisely the inability of senior managers to communicate with those who have to implement the programme. There is no question of any "rationalization" of the Sector's organizational structure, where there are probably the most injustices and opacity in human resources management.

9. An analysis of the programmes of the Natural Sciences Sector and the Social and Human Sciences Sector was conducted by an expert team which went through many critical episodes. It should be pointed out that the staff in the Sectors concerned, up to the highest level, are unable to comply with the final conclusions and recommendations of the team (176 EX/7).

10. The second axis of action covered in the Director-General's report concerns field offices. Despite the official line, the offices have not been strengthened, but rather neglected. The forced transfer of certain staff members working at Headquarters has not been made in strict accordance with the needs of the offices concerned, but reflects the desire to "get rid" of individuals who for various reasons are considered undesirable at Headquarters. In March, the Director-General told the staff of the Education Sector that he could not agree with the idea that a transfer away from Headquarters was a punishment. Nevertheless, the staff's attitude reflects current practice in human resources management at Headquarters. In contrast, in the field offices, using the pretext of decentralization, and depending on the personality of the head of the office, dictatorial management of human resources may be the practice and the staff, especially local staff, have no recourse. One of the reasons that staff are reluctant to leave Headquarters is precisely the total lack of oversight concerning human resources management. Budget and programme management is in part monitored from Headquarters, but human resources management is left to the good faith of the head of the office.

11. The third axis of action concerns **the support and administrative functions**. An internal debate seems to have taken place and the staff can only trust in the good sense resulting from in-house experience and expertise. It is to be hoped that the few aspects of the systematic neglect of administrative regulations revealed by the very timely external audit requested by the Executive Board (176 EX/39) will encourage Member States to give the Organization the means to put in place an Administration that actually manages the Secretariat and programme implementation. The External Auditor said that it was unacceptable for those placing orders to also be making the purchase, with respect to both equipment and consulting services, but the same problem arises regarding the choice of expertise for longer periods (recruitment).

12. It is indeed the fourth axis of action referred to in the Director-General's report which is wholly defective at present in UNESCO: "**managerial capacity and accountability**" has reached the lowest level imaginable, with an average score that must be close to zero. The initiatives welcomed by the Director-General are contained in documents that are sometimes well thought-out but never actually applied to the letter. There is no accountability at UNESCO and the mess in the Education Sector is only one example. Independently of the individuals with the highest responsibilities in the Organization, the management system is incapable of self-regulation, especially since the UNESCO Administrative Manual, because it has been ignored by senior managers, is today no more than admirable testimony to the successive styles of administration in the Organization throughout its more than 60 years of existence. The pretext of decentralization has dispersed responsibility instead of reinforcing it and, as STU has already explained in document 175 EX/6 Add., "*Decentralization and the delegation of authority entailed, together with the complete lack of financial resources for human resources management, have created 'no*

*man's land' situations in this area. It is very often the case that matters go unresolved because nobody assumes responsibility."*

13. The fifth axis of action, which the Director-General calls "**a rapid response capacity**", concerns the ability of the Organization to act in post-conflict/post-disaster situations. The improvements remain to be proved, but there is certainly no rapid reaction to human resource management problems, despite the constant and worrying growth in major and minor conflicts in the Secretariat.

14. STU cannot give an opinion on the proposal for the increased use of **National Professional Officers (NPOs)** (sixth axis of action), but can draw attention to the staff management problems inherent in this kind of contract and to the fact that this type of initiative risks undermining the international civil service.

15. The seventh axis of action concerns one of the most important aspects of the failure to manage human resources: the use of the skills **of staff in the General Service category**. External candidates, who clearly meet the requirements for Professional status, are recruited to posts in the General Service category to carry out work that goes far beyond the requirements of the post. This blocks the career development of staff who have worked for the Organization for a long time and is a source of demoralization. Furthermore, the posts of many staff members in the General Service category have had to evolve towards including tasks that are specific to Professional posts (owing to staff shortages and thanks to the skills and dedication of the staff in place), but for budgetary reasons and on the grounds of geographical distribution, staff in those posts are denied recognition of the importance of their new responsibilities and the quality of their work.

16. With regard to the eighth axis of action, **gender balance** and geographical distribution, STU refuses to give any credit to these figures as long as balance has not been achieved throughout the Secretariat structures, in particular at the very top of the hierarchy.

17. Lastly, the ninth axis of action concerns a renewed "commitment to recruit and retain highly qualified staff and to provide a stimulating work environment". With regard to the working environment, STU has denounced – especially since the 33rd session of the General Conference – its dangerous deterioration. As to the "commitment" regarding recruitment, this must surely reflect ignorance of the Constitution of the Organization which, in its Article VI, paragraph 4, **imposes** the following on the Director-General: *Subject to the paramount consideration of securing the highest standards of integrity, efficiency and technical competence, appointment to the staff shall be on as wide a geographical basis as possible.* In fact, everyday practices in recruitment and promotion which are completely vitiated contradict this obligation in every way, which proves the ineffectiveness of the various measures described by the Director-General in his report.

18. Furthermore, it should be recalled that STU had already pointed out to the Executive Board (175 EX/6 Add.) that "recruitment at UNESCO continues to be effected outside the written regulations. The procedure as a whole is respected only in appearance. Practically all advertised posts are earmarked for persons selected before the official assessment, which is arranged in such a way as to appear fair. Thus, there is no competition and the best or most deserving candidate has no chance of being selected. The same is true of succession planning for staff members nearing the statutory retirement age. When a post is about to fall vacant, it is 'assigned', before any assessment has been carried out, to a person in conformity with criteria that are not always those stipulated in the Staff Regulations and Staff Rules". Unfortunately nothing has changed since last year in this regard. As we stated previously in document 174 EX/6 Add., "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". If there has been any change in this area, it has been no more than a worsening of the situation, for HRM, unconcerned and lacking

resources, no longer plays any role whatsoever in verifying and correcting the application of procedures.

## **II. Update on the Human Resources Policy Framework**

19. The harmonization of UNESCO's administrative practices in human resources management with those used within the United Nations system may be considered an obvious need but it should not, under any circumstance, be a ground for administrative inaction. Pending the harmonization of those practices, the disastrous situation in which UNESCO's staff find themselves is left unattended to deteriorate at an accelerated rate.

20. As to the introduction at UNESCO of an ethics programme based on the United Nations model, according to the meagre information gleaned by STU at the meeting of the Advisory Council on Personnel Policies (ACPP), it would amount to instituting whistle-blowing ("voluntary disclosure" 176 EX/INF.12, paragraph 18) as the main self-regulatory mechanism. Under the rules and regulations in force in the Organization, staff members may report administrative abuse. Stalemate stems from the failure of the central services to take any remedial action. For example, the only person who raised objections to the serious irregularities revealed by the External Auditor was (and continues to be) the victim of his integrity. How would an ethics office have been able to redress matters? Instead of democratic routes to participatory governance, the Administration (at least HRM and IOS) seems to be promoting the most sinister and indirect routes. STU demands that no final decision be taken on the subject, unless it is submitted to the ACPP for discussion, in accordance with the rules and regulations.

21. In document 175 EX/6 Add., STU informed the Executive Board that "whenever STU draws attention to an administrative irregularity, HRM neither makes nor enforces any change, even after verifying the case". In regard to a specific example of failure to observe the rules and regulations, we stated later on in the document that "HRM has looked into the case, but for reasons unknown to us, there has been no follow-up". The irregular administrative procedure that we were denouncing was carried through to conclusion, and no one voiced the slightest concern.

22. In addition, the recent distribution of a booklet containing Standards of Conduct in the International Civil Service (the title of which has been translated incorrectly in the French version of the report by the Director-General) was greeted with much hilarity among staff members who have so often been powerless witnesses to the constant flouting of those rules. It may also be noted that the current revised version of the Standards had been submitted by the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) since 2001 to the United Nations General Assembly and has been published officially at UNESCO only now at the beginning of 2007. The posters put up all over UNESCO spotlighting the front cover of the booklet cannot have any educational effect. Conversely, in a letter to the Deputy Director-General, STU renewed its proposal, in cooperation with the Association of Former UNESCO Staff Members (AFUS), to provide training on the rights and duties of international civil servants for all staff members at Headquarters free of charge. That letter has gone unanswered, despite the enthusiasm shown on many occasions by the Director-General in that regard.

### **Human Resources Management Information Systems**

23. Human resources management software that is not harmonized with the Organization's other management resources is not necessarily efficient merely because it involves the use of modern technology, and it can never replace human responsibility. For example, the Tulip leave management software is very user-friendly, but is flawed by the lack of accountability.

### **Merit-based promotion and recognition scheme**

24. The idea of proposing to the staff a merit recognition scheme consisting of an award granted only once cannot be motivating in the course of a normal career. As to the merit-based promotion

scheme, inasmuch as staff members have been demotivated by such extensive lack of recognition, the rate of promotions required initially is so high as to be unfeasible under a realistic budget. Consequently, only strict observance of human resources management rules could remedy the situation and restore satisfaction and motivation within the UNESCO Secretariat. Moreover, the proposed merit-based promotion scheme, of which the Organization's staff has been deprived for six years, was announced by the Director-General on 15 November 2005 ("Prior to the reintroduction **next year** of the merit-based promotion system, which will apply to all staff") and has still not come into force. Is the delay involuntary?

### **III. Key staffing data**

25. The statistics published in the report by the Director-General have not been set out consistently, and the explanations are not clear. Thus, according to the report by the Director-General, one may be heartened to note that between document 30 C/5 and the functioning of the Secretariat as at 1 January 2007, there are only nine ADG posts out of the initial ten. However, how does that explain UNESCO's need, in addition to the ADGs for the five programme sectors and for the Sectors for Administration and for External Relations, for another two ADG posts, especially in such a difficult budgetary situation? G and P posts, and even D posts, are abolished readily, but apparently it is normal to extend beyond the statutory retirement age the appointments of holders of ADG posts who do not discharge the responsibilities attaching thereto.

#### **Contracts of retired staff**

26. The mere fact that it is realized, when a staff member retires at the statutory retirement age, that his or her knowledge and skills are indispensable to and irreplaceable within the Organization, is tangible proof of poor human resources management. It would be normal for people to be trained in advance to replace staff members naturally or for provision to be made sufficiently in advance to recruit the individuals required for staff renewal.

27. Furthermore, in regard to one-US-dollar symbolic consultant contracts (covered in document 176 EX/42), it is totally untrue to state that the consultants, "who include former staff members, are mainly used in programme sectors to ensure a smooth transition of expertise and institutional memory" (para. 25 of the document). In fact, these former staff members or consultants for life pursue a programme that only they know and implement and do not contribute at all to the transmission of knowledge, which they should, moreover, have done before reaching the statutory retirement age.

28. Some former staff members do make a remarkable contribution to programme implementation, but the use of their services on false volunteer grounds is detrimental to the effective renewal and quality of the staff. Former UNESCO staff members have formed an association (AFUS) that will, no doubt, contribute readily and free of charge to the discussion that the Secretariat must hold in order to improve its functioning regularly.

#### **Insecure contracts**

29. Budget constraints and, above all, lack of honesty towards the Member States are the primary reasons for the widespread use of "insecure" (consultant and, above all, fee) contracts, a means of hiring staff who are not officially entered in the accounts under staff costs. Many persons, over whom HRM has no oversight, are employed on fee contracts to do work identical to that done by staff members (permanent office attendance during the same working hours, assignment of office, telephone number and electronic address, and so on). Everyone knows about and tolerates this flagrant irregularity because it is, in some instances, the only means of having to hand the expertise required for the various teams to perform effectively. Persons thus employed by the Organization do not, however, enjoy any social benefits or labour rights. Both STU and ISAU have raised this intractable problem time and again, but no solution seems likely because such contracts do not, in theory, concern human resources management.