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Item 30 of the provisional agenda

REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL ON THE REVISED MEDIUM-TERM SECURITY PLAN FOR UNESCO HEADQUARTERS

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.

Comments of the UNESCO Staff Union (STU) on document 185 EX/30: **Report by the Director-General on the revised medium-term security plan for UNESCO Headquarters**

Well-being, safety and security in an architectural work of art, UNESCO

Once again, the revised plan focuses on security from external threat rather than providing a holistic strategy and measures to enhance the well-being of all who come to UNESCO.

The Staff Union is deeply concerned by external security threats that may arise. Indeed, we were the first to call on the preceding Director-General to repatriate UNESCO personnel from Iraq after the bombing of United Nations Headquarters in Baghdad following the United States invasion. And we joined all our sister United Nations agencies and staff associations in calling for serious protection measures, which in turn led to the current Minimum Operating Security Standards (MOSS). But the tragic Baghdad attack and subsequent ones were linked to the fact that UNESCO, like the eight other specialized agencies, had been involved in monitoring the sanctions against the previous Iraqi Government, and were thus not considered neutral nor truly engaged in contributing to the well-being of the Iraqi people. Staff associations and unions throughout the United Nations system remain vigilant and demand maximum safety conditions in a world of increasing conflict, disaster and challenging peace-building and peacekeeping missions.

UNESCO is not safe and welcoming to its physically challenged staff, delegations and visitors

This unacceptable situation has been called to the attention of security and administration for years. The plan contained in 185 EX/30 continues to neglect this critical aspect. The measures taken during the renovation actually make access, movement and evacuation more difficult. The Suffren entrance has been dysfunctional since its renovation. There is no ramp enabling people climbing the stairs to secure their balance. The elevator for the wheelchair-bound constitutes a barrier rather than an aid. The “sas” do not accommodate all individuals who have badge-entry. Indeed, they constitute a real security risk, as they oblige individuals to line up outside the building rather than ensuring fluidity of movement. There is no ramp at that entrance, or at the Fontenoy entrance. Internally, physically challenged visitors and staff have difficult access to remote restroom facilities at the end of each wing of the building. The fire doors are too heavy for them to open and no automatic system has been put in place. We have also encountered neglect of this personnel during fire alarms and even downright refusal to allow them to enter the central elevators.

The revised security plan makes no reference to the safety and well-being of the physically challenged, the elderly, or even individuals who need to move with care.

UNESCO’S staff, former staff members, delegations and visitors are its wealth, not its potential enemy

The STU, along with the other staff and former staff bodies, conducted a study with the Federation of International Civil Servants’ Associations (FICSA) of the state of access for all former staff and current personnel throughout the United Nations system. We demonstrated conclusively that the United Nations Headquarters, the World Bank and the United Nations bodies in Geneva are open to former as well as current personnel under virtually the same conditions. (The findings are again attached in the annex). We again reject the restrictions that the head of UNESCO security and buildings has sought and seeks to make. There is no need for further zoning to “protect” our Human Resources, Bureau of the Comptroller, IOS, offices, etc. from anyone. We consider that once access to the Fontenoy and Miollis buildings has been controlled through the badge system, there is no further need to restrict movement (although access to DIT and certain very specific offices may be limited). We also consider that our Director-General is adequately protected within her offices by the current arrangements, and welcome her willingness to move around the offices, meeting rooms and corridors in a gracious manner. She sets the tone for a welcoming UNESCO.

Safety and security guards and their role

The safety and security personnel of UNESCO are the first welcoming faces visitors and staff encounter. They merit our respect and a status commensurate with the role they play. We consider that they must be staff members so that they get to know people and carry out their welcoming as well as their restrictive role. The STU does not condone outsourcing or a reliance on supernumerary contracts over a long period of time. We also consider that their conditions of work should not include duty posted outside the Fontenoy building, as is currently the case. The temporary structure is uncomfortable and the posting is unnecessary. The control of movement of vehicles and the gate are sufficient to filter entrance prior to the glass doors of the Fontenoy building, the turnstiles, and reception security.

A work of art devoted to intercultural and international cooperation to protect, not a bunker

We join many representatives of country delegations who spoke in the previous sessions of the Executive Board and General Conference about the core functions and nature of UNESCO’s facilities. The staff share their view that UNESCO Headquarters does not require – nor can it be protected from external terrorist threat by – the construction of a costly “forward security post”. In addition to the irrelevance of such a measure, it would also impede fluidity of movement for entry to

the Fontenoy building. We consider that the existing measures (reception and security for visitors and attendees at meetings; turnstiles for staff, former staff and delegations) are perfectly adequate. Indeed, the additional resources would be better spent on increasing the number of firemen on regular posts.

Similarly, for the Bonvin/Miollis buildings, we consider that each of the entrances is adequately restrictive and welcoming. The limitations concern the entrance of cars at both sites. The proposals pictured in annex comparing those entrances with Vienna neglect the fact that the Vienna complex includes many United Nations bodies with mandates and potential “threats” that differ from those of UNESCO.

The STU:

- Calls for a well-being, safety and security plan, not a “protection from external threat” approach;
- Calls for urgent safety and well-being measures to be taken for the access and movement of the physically challenged and others;
- Calls for respectful working conditions for our safety and security personnel;
- Reminds our senior management that UNESCO is a work of art devoted to intercultural and international cooperation and understanding. We need to continue to fulfil that role or lose our credibility altogether.
- Will work for the safety and security of UNESCO personnel all over the world, along with the other United Nations agency staff associations, especially in field locations with inherent risk.