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HEADQUARTERS MATTERS

PART I

REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL, IN COOPERATION WITH THE HEADQUARTERS COMMITTEE, ON MANAGING THE UNESCO HEADQUARTERS COMPLEX

ADDENDUM

COMMENTS BY THE UNESCO STAFF UNION (STU)

Pursuant to Item 2805.7 of the UNESCO Administrative Manual, the UNESCO Staff Union (STU) submits its comments on this report by the Director-General.

1. The UNESCO Staff Union (STU) expresses deep concern on several points in document 190 EX/33.

2. With particular reference to paragraph 6 of document 190 EX/33, STU objects to the arbitrary implementation of the **reorganization of the technical workshops and the formation of versatile teams** without prior discussion with the staff members concerned and without complying with the host country's safety standards, thus jeopardizing the safety of the buildings. Owing to the diversity of the trades concerned and the variety of the skills required, the trades are not interchangeable, as each trade has its distinctive features. The question of how an electrician may work as a plumber, or a heating specialist as a locksmith without the required training and qualification thus rightly arises. In addition to the steady decline in technical staff numbers in recent years, to which STU has continuously drawn the attention of Member States and which has now reached the critical threshold for the minimum upkeep of buildings, STU wonders how these under-staffed teams can perform their duties properly.

3. Secondly, the **Headquarters office optimization and utilization plan** (paragraphs 7 to 11) proposed by the Director-General is designed to make savings for the Organization, but STU

wonders about its feasibility in regard to its effects on the staff's working conditions. Firstly, does the recommendation of the Corporate Services Committee (CSC) based on HRM's analysis under which 220 offices at the Fontenoy site could be vacated so that some staff currently accommodated in the Bonvin building could move to Fontenoy thus releasing space in Building VII for rental take into account office space standards applied within the United Nations system? More important yet, has the Fontenoy building's technical capacity to accommodate additional staff been analysed and, if so, were the potential technical limits of existing systems (Internet, telephone, etc.) crucial to the performance of the staff's daily tasks taken into consideration? The impact on the working relations and morale of the staff of the two sectors left at Bonvin (which are to be merged), which will be cut off from the remainder of the Organization, also gives cause for concern. Lastly, what effects will it have on the future of units at Bonvin (cafeteria, bar, Commissary and Day Nursery) and, above all, on their staff?

4. Lastly, in regard to **safety and security at UNESCO Headquarters** covered in paragraphs 16 and 17 of the document, STU is more worried than ever about the safety of the staff and of the permanent delegations, as the Administration has acknowledged that the complement of fire and security officers is insufficient to guarantee safety. STU sounds the alarm in regard to the failure to comply with the host State's safety standards, which lays heavy responsibilities on that State and on Member States and the Administration which have made the decisions. Defective and obsolete facilities (power generator, etc.), too, in which "major unforeseeable failures can occur at any moment" (Annex I, page 2, of document 190 EX/33 Part I), are non-compliant. STU therefore appeals yet again to Member States and to the Administration, on account on the liability to be borne in the event of a serious incident, to allocate sufficient resources to provide for the safety of the staff and of members of delegations on the Fontenoy and Miollis/Bonvin sites.

5. As to the **restaurant services** (paragraph 19), STU is monitoring the situation very closely. STU has expressed its disquiet at the likely outsourcing of those services on several occasions to the Director-General and to ADG/MSS. STU has objected to the current services being replaced by an outside service that would undoubtedly be more costly and less efficient for the permanent delegations and the staff. Everyone knows the quality of the in-house services, in particular the seventh-floor restaurant. Furthermore, STU calls for these colleagues' contracts to be standardized, as their service and status fall worryingly into a legal vacuum, as already reported by the External Auditor (paragraph 33, section 2.3, of document 187 EX/35 Part I). STU is surprised, moreover, at the Administration's unwarranted and increasingly frequent refusal to allow events to be held in those spaces, thus depriving the Restaurant Services of substantial resources in these hard times, with direct effects on the wages of the Restaurant Services' staff (no bonuses or wage rises).

6. In Recommendation No. 8, the External Auditor had called for the Council of Users to be reactivated (paragraph 59 of document 187 EX/35 Part I); the Council should have been convened in accordance with Administrative Manual, Item 12.7, Appendix 12.7A, paragraph E, but it has not been reactivated to this day.

7. More than one year ago, STU expressed deep concern about the future of the **Commissary** (paragraphs 19 and 20). STU recalls that the Commissary was established by the staff for the staff (as a staff cooperative established in 1954) and that it renders a great service daily to the staff and to members of the permanent delegations.

8. The future of the Commissary is now under threat. As a result of serious managerial dysfunction that triggered the suspension of Manual provisions by the Director-General in 2004, the Administration has exercised full control over the management of its activities for more than eight years, thus supplanting the cooperative's Management Committee and General Assembly of members. This non-profit and non-commercial service is now under threat owing to a misinterpretation of the External Auditor's Recommendation No. 9 (187 EX/35 Part I), which provided, in particular, for a consultation of staff associations that has not been held, and on account of the External Auditor's failure to glean certain knowledge of the cooperative's operations

by not consulting the members of the very last-constituted Management Committee and by relying only on the Administration. It is to be noted that the External Auditor found several anomalies, including the lack of written procedures that actually existed within the Management Committee framework. The Commissary's accounts to date show a sizeable positive balance that could be used for its renovation and reorganization, but the Administration is strongly opposed to these matters that should be decided by the actual members of the cooperative. Such plans had, moreover, been considered by the last-constituted Management Committee.

9. STU objects to any disestablishment of the Commissary on account of the *de facto* management by the Administration, which should have been a temporary step only, and it decries the Administration's stranglehold, which has been in place for too long. STU calls for the resumption of the placement of orders for articles that has been blocked authoritarianly by the Administration.

10. Furthermore, the dispute that gave rise to the suspension of the Manual item has since been settled. STU therefore requests the Director-General to place the Commissary's operations once more on a legal footing and to reactivate the Manual item. Staff members might thus again obtain Commissary membership cards, call a General Assembly and elect the Management Committee. The rules will then be observed and progress will be achieved on this point.