

**FICSA**

Dear Sir/Madam,

As part of continuous efforts to modernize policies relating to family life within the United Nations, to improve the work environment and to align such policies with best practice and international standards, FICSA is aware that some organizations – including UNICEF and The Global Fund – have reviewed and revised policies regarding parental leave. Members of the Federation have brought such developments to our attention, and have urged the Executive Committee to reach out to the executive heads of all international organizations with a view to opening up a broader dialogue.

FICSA is greatly encouraged by policy developments such as the ones cited above and the demonstration of leadership for inclusive, family-friendly workplaces. We also wish to note with appreciation the updated personal status policy that is applied nearly universally across the UN system, according equal recognition regardless of the staff member's nationality. Such policies enable the UN to lead by example, standing for equality and rights, and strengthening our ability to recruit diversity and excellence from around the world. We therefore are hopeful that a new wave of HR policy reform can enable staff – both men and women – to better balance their family and work obligations, and in doing so, the UN can be counted among leading global employers that are family-friendly and advancing gender equality.

Based on views shared with us by our members, FICSA would like to note the following concerns in relation to current policies on parental leave:

1- Current family leave policies do not meet the needs and expectations of a new generation of UN worker. According to a staff survey conducted by FICSA and CCISUA earlier this year, over 80% of respondents under the age of 40 (n=2,760) said that 16 weeks maternity leave is insufficient, and 24 weeks – like the UNICEF policy – would be more appropriate.

2- The gap between maternity leave and paternity leave provisions (usually 4 months versus 1 month), does not reflect emerging best practice among Member States and global employers. Modern family leave policies enable new fathers to play a more active role in caregiving. Furthermore, substantial gaps between maternity and paternity leave can convey that caregiving is “a woman's job”, and also result in women being professionally disadvantaged due to longer absences from the workplace – therefore disproportionately bearing the professional consequences.

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To: Executive heads of FICSA member organizations

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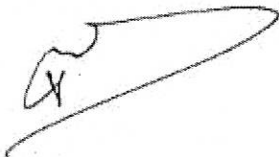
3- Adoption leave policies are not sufficiently nuanced to reflect different caregiving responsibilities that arise in different contexts (e.g. adoption of a newborn or surrogacy, versus adoption of an older child of school age; children with severe functional impairments or other significant needs). As such, adoption leave policies may not always provide the level of support and flexibility commensurate with the staff member's family role and obligations.

4- In some organizations, paternity leave provisions are weaker than adoption leave provisions. As such, biological fathers would have less time available to devote to their family obligations than an adoptive father.

5- FICSA encourages organizations to review their family leave policies and discuss these with their elected staff representatives. Effective family leave policies will enable men and women to meet their family obligations and thereby reinforce and support a staff member's ability to maximize their professional impact. I therefore write to you today to seek your personal support to ensuring that all ensuing discussions are guided by three main principles: advancing gender equality, protecting families as the natural and fundamental group unit of society, and upholding the best interests of children. These are all UN principles at their heart.

FICSA looks forward to receiving your feedback and stands ready to provide any clarifying information on our positions. We hope that convergent efforts will lead to a modern family-friendly HR policy framework across the UN system, strengthening our organizations for the future.

Yours sincerely,



Diab El-Tabari  
FICSA President

cc. FICSA member associations/unions  
FICSA Executive Committee/Regional Representatives  
Standing Committee on Social Security/OHS