

# FICSA CIRCULAR



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To: Chairs, Member Associations/Unions  
Members of the Executive Committee  
Chairs, Members with Associate Status  
Chairs, Associations with Consultative Status  
Presidents, Federations with Observer Status  
Chairs and Vice-Chairs of Standing Committees

From: Evelyn Kortum, General Secretary

## **REPORT ON FICSA'S PARTICIPATION IN THE 39<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF THE HUMAN RESOURCES NETWORK (HR NETWORK) (3 July 2019, OPCW The Hague)**

*By Evelyn Kortum, General Secretary*

On the last day this three-day meeting attended by HR Directors opened up for staff representatives. It was also attended by the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) representatives and the Chief Inspector of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU). Staff Federation representatives from FICSA and CCISUA were present as well staff representatives from OPCW, UNDP under the chapeau of the Federations.

While at this meeting Michael Rosetz from the Chief Executives Board (CEB) announced the decision of the ILO Tribunal on the post adjustment. He summarized that there were 1284 complaints, 5 judges, that the ICSC decision was legally flawed and set aside and that payments would be made retroactively back to February 2018 with a 5% interest rate. The Chair of the HR Network said that they would need to discuss what this decision means for implementation across the common system.



The DSG, Odette Melono, of OPCW opened the meeting. She stressed the need for a more people-centered workplace, engagement, the importance of a good organizational culture and proper performance management.

The third day discussed a number of issues of which some were elaborated on during the previous two days. Below are the discussion points of interest to staff representatives:

**Recommendations on increases:** The ICSC representative explained that boarding provisions are proposed to be increased by 5.3% due to the depreciation of the US dollar, less boarding fees as boarding is now less used. A 15% increase in the declining scale was also proposed and it was mentioned that next year there will be an extensive assessment on the compensation

package including data collection. This was described as a labor-intensive exercise. It was mentioned that it is important to develop a coherent and logical narrative that should be used for the UN General Assembly (UNGA) for such proposed increases when they keep cutting cost.

The next meeting of the ICSC will take place from 29 July to 9 August 2019 in Vienna.

**General Service Salary Survey:** Staff in New York requested a separate survey. Currently, two vendors have sent their data and they are waiting for the 3<sup>rd</sup> vendor's data. Apparently, the data of the first two is slightly different and covers up to 60% of the locations. The concern is that there are different results with the same database and that not all requirements of the current methodology are met. Currently the system already uses external data which is reference checked. There is a plan to evaluate the data received and then to pilot it in a few locations once the 3<sup>rd</sup> vendor sends the data. There could be a quantification of benefits as there are right now differences between vendors and the current trend is to lumpsum these. Member States made a commitment to provide data.

A recommendation was now to use a normal government employer for benchmarking instead of a Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) civil servant. It is a recommendation to keep the status quo.

Another meeting of the Working Group will take place which will go towards moving to the use of external data. The LSSC will definitively continue and maintain some flexibility because otherwise it will not be possible to move forward. It was proposed to have one to two Working Group meetings next year.

**Separation payments:** It was reported that Member States are not convinced that this is the right thing to do. They left the option open to come back to it next year. There is a need to think strategically as there are priority issues and also to consider how many increases will most likely go through.

**Field duty stations:** For the review of field duty stations organizations have been sending representatives who are not up to speed. Participants also lag behind in sharing information obtained from attending these meetings. The ICSC representative pointed out that this is an important exercise under high scrutiny by Member States. She mentioned that the Federations and ICSC are a good example of collaboration and that they almost always reach consensus. In a private communication the FICSA representative for field issues was praised for her excellent preparation and knowledge of field issues.

**Parental Leave:** The ICSC looked at good practices in external entities and the UN. There are some progressive global trends that are under study.

**Global Staff Survey:** It was pointed out that one staff member can complete the survey several times and that it would not be possible therefore, to analyze the results in a statistically reliable manner. ICSC responded that they are aware of this flaw but that they have no hidden agenda.

The Chair concluded that we need to reflect on how we can do surveys better and learn our lessons including better coordination between the different entities.

**Non-family allowance:** No adjustment proposed. It was mentioned by a participant that it still seems to be missing what actually makes a family and a non-family duty station apart from security. Other criteria should be schools, climate, etc.

**Mobility incentives:** Will be reviewed

**Joint Inspection Unit (JIU):** The Chief Inspector attended a HR Network Meeting for the first time. He stressed that exchange is an important mechanism for his work and that it will be beneficial for all.

**Interagency mobility:** The session spoke in turns of Interagency mobility and Geographical mobility. The Chief Inspector outlined that there are different sets of requirements in HQ and the field and that it is not necessary to strive for uniform application. He described interagency mobility as a subset of something else and not a stand-alone. Therefore, in order to connect the multiple dots, one has to look at the organizational needs. There are common business operations despite the fragmentation in the UN system and a lot of work has been done already. However, Interagency mobility remains staff-driven, is not encouraged by organizations and not valued. Many staff associations interviewed said that staff do not know about the opportunities of Interagency mobility.

The inspector kept referring back to the 2005 Interagency mobility accord and was unclear about what it was intended to accomplish. Participants were also not clear and could not answer the question. One key barrier identified is the protectionism of organizations, as well as the lack of a policy on Interagency mobility, the diversity in staff health insurances and the different selection and recruitment processes and policies. The Chief Inspector stressed that there is a need to adapt to the changing world of work. There is a need for adequate social protection and support to staff in transitioning.

The Chief Inspector further informed that there are 55% of international women who are based in headquarters. Gender might be an angle to consider in advancing Interagency mobility as well as a need for support and educational opportunities.

It was added that the system culture requires strengthening ('one-UN') and that the interest of nationally recruited staff are not taken into account. Modest measures already pose great difficulties, as common selections are nearly impossible and also unsuccessful when attempted, for example, in Nairobi. The inspector referred to the 2014 Working Group that recommended 40 measures which have to date not been taken up or even assessed as to their practicability.

Participants agreed that it is an existential issue for the organizations to meet Member States' demands of mobility. However, there are currently no role models (at least not at all levels of an organization). Participants mentioned that organizations have different levels of funding and are heterogeneous. They also agreed that consistency in application of Interagency mobility is needed, as well as greater trust.

Performance management was a contentious issue as low performers were previously taken up and cost the receiving organizations a lot of hassle and money. Performance evaluations need to be reliable. Common Assessment Centers were mentioned, as well as the identification of common elements in selection and recruitment procedures and a system-deep thinking about what needs to be change. However, financial liabilities remained the most contentious issue. This is one reason why some organizations consider secondments as risky and prefer to focus on transfers.

Organizations need to understand what is in it for them as well as for the staff, as Interagency mobility needs to be mutually beneficial.

The inspector responded that the system interest has not been clearly articulated. There is a need for a narrative, a business case, success stories, a promotional campaign and transferable processes.

UNHCR had an interesting approach insofar as they operate on the premise that talent does not belong to them, but to the common system. The participant also stressed that it is good opportunity to look again at dual-career couples, sharing good practices instead of another policy document.

The inspector agreed that spousal employment, dual careers are a second good entry point as it connects the gender aspect. Other ideas discussed were a UN compendium/common portal of where staff could go. He informed that a draft report would be issued by the end of August, after he has talked to the UN staff college and how they view the issue of Interagency mobility.

**Post Adjustment:** Kieran Walsh, ILO Department of Statistic provided a summary on the post adjustment technical development. He said that joint proposals were formed by the Commission and the ACPAQ Task Force is finished in theory with its work. There is a trend to keep New York as the base. He pointed out that there is a fine line between statistical and policy issues. Issues to be tackled include a concern for the heavy emphasis on outlet selection, the transparent process for New York as the base, the rent for which no major change is proposed, but that most issues require further study and development. The risk is about the right handling of breaks in the series (i.e., linking issue properly) and some changes have the potential to have a clear systematic impact on Post Adjustment Index (PAI).

The ICSC added that a recommendation was made to introduce changes that impact the PAI and to protect staff salaries. Further study is required on how it will be implemented and what impact is expected.

**Mental Health Strategy:** There are four strategies that underly the Mental Health Strategy, which are *welcome and support for affected staff; sustainable funding; quality services; and healthy workplaces*. The group that focuses on support services presented to the meeting participants.

FICSA assured their full support to the implementation of the Mental Health Strategy UN-wide and stressed the importance of leadership from the top of each organization in order to obtain positive results. FICSA also encouraged every organization to be on the Implementation Board where FICSA is a full member through its highly active Representative for Europe.

FICSA stressed that the strength of the strategy lies in its holistic approach in that it includes the voices of staff, HR counsellors, OMB, and medical services. However, FICSA regretted that the strategy currently only addresses symptoms and not the sources of Mental Ill Health in that it focuses on secondary and tertiary prevention only, such as counselling services and training. She pointed out that the Mental Health Survey results found that poor mental health is associated with the number of years worked for the UN and stressed how worrying that fact is and said no-one should suffer from working at the UN or anywhere else. She furthermore quoted another result that relates to low job satisfaction, perceived incivility and conflict in the workplace that impacts on mental health. She asked for a focus on primary prevention or linking to those who work on that through the Implementation Board.

The Chair said this was not part of their responsibility but said that it is a good idea to link with those groups responsible for primary preventive approaches.

**Gender parity:** This is now described for international staff but there are also targets set by the SG on locally recruited staff which will be tackled during a second phase.

 UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

CEB

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**Chief Executives Board  
for Coordination**

CEB/2019/HLCM/HR/12  
24 May 2019

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Human Resources Network  
39<sup>th</sup> Session, 01 – 03 July 2019  
ICC and OPCW, The Hague

**DRAFT PROVISIONAL AGENDA**

**Monday 01 July** *(closed HR Directors session)*

**13:00 – 17:30** *Session duration*

**Tuesday 02 July** *(closed HR Directors Retreat)*

**09:30 – 17:30** *Session duration*

**Wednesday 03 July** *(open session, hosted by OPCW)*

**9:00 – 15:30** *Session duration*

**11:00 – 11:15** *Coffee break*

**12:30 – 13:30** *Lunch break*

1. Opening and update from HLCM and other fora
2. ICSC-related topics
3. Inter-Agency Mobility – discussion with JIU
4. Update from UN Staff Councillors, and update on Mental Health Strategy
5. Disability Inclusion – Update and Experience exchange

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