

# FICSA CIRCULAR



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To: Chairs, Member Associations/Unions  
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Presidents, Federations with Observer Status  
Chairs and Vice-Chairs of Standing Committees

From: Gemma Vestal, General Secretary

## **REPORT BY THE FEDERATION OF INTERNATIONAL CIVIL SERVANTS' ASSOCIATIONS (FICSA) ON THE 83<sup>RD</sup> SESSION OF THE INTERNATIONAL CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION (ICSC)**

(WIPO Geneva, 25 July to 5 August 2016)

Submitted by Diab El-Tabari, FICSA President

The Federation was represented by Diab El-Tabari, President; Gemma Vestal, General Secretary; and Brett Fitzgerald, Information Officer, at the 83rd session of the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC), which took place in Geneva from 25 July to 5 August 2016.

As the WIPO Director General began to deliver his statement at the opening of the session, the representatives of all three staff federations stood up and walked out of the room in a dignified manner in a show of solidarity and to demonstrate support to the WIPO Staff Association and its former President who was summarily dismissed by the WIPO Director General. Once the latter had completed his statement and left the room, the representatives of the three staff federations returned to the room to resume the meeting.

Following the ICSC Chairman's opening report on activities which had been carried out since the 82<sup>nd</sup> session of the Commission, FICSA and CCISUA stated that they had taken note of the decisions of the General Assembly, and indicated that implementation issues concerning the compensation package might need fine-tuning and corrective action over time. The two federations stated that they looked forward to contributing to the Commission's work during the next phase of the review (i.e. the review of other categories of staff) and emphasized the importance of locally recruited staff. They expressed their concern over the increased use of National Professional Officers in some regional offices, sometimes to perform the work of international Professional staff, and welcomed the opportunity to look into this issue.

With respect to the new mandatory age of separation for staff already in service prior to 1 January 2014, the representatives of the two federations added that they would have been more content with a decision to raise the mandatory age of separation as of 1 January 2017 instead of the approved implementation date of 1 January 2018.

Issues which were considered by the Commission during its 83<sup>rd</sup> session include:

- (a) Framework for human resources management;
- (b) Contractual arrangements: review of the implementation of the three types of contracts;
- (c) Separation payments and staff separation trends;
- (d) Compensation package-related issues (status of the implementation of the new common system compensation package, field allowances, relocation-related payments, dependency allowance, education grant scheme, the use of categories of staff in the United Nations common system);
- (e) Conditions of service of staff in the Professional and higher categories (base/floor salary scale, evolution of the United Nations/United States net remuneration margin, 2016 round of cost-of-living surveys at headquarters duty stations and report on gender balance); and
- (f) Conditions of service of the General Service and other locally recruited staff (survey of best prevailing conditions of employment in Geneva and the adjustment of dependency allowances following the unfreezing of allowances).

#### **Framework for human resources management**

FICSA supported the revised human resources management framework with the need to undertake further work on certain elements. Those included staff/management relations, timely and transparent recruitment that was free from discrimination and a compensation system that satisfied staff.

The Commission decided:

- (a) To approve the revised human resources management framework;
- (b) To encourage organizations to use the new ICSC human resources management framework as an instrument to reinforce the human resources management in the organization;
- (c) That the framework should continue to be updated to be useful for all stakeholders; and
- (d) To invite organizations to include links to their own relevant policy documents.

#### **Contractual arrangements: review of the implementation of the three types of contracts**

FICSA stated that it had always supported the ICSC contractual framework which included the three types of appointments. However, it expressed concern regarding the use of temporary appointments and the increasing use of non-staff contracts, noting that the organizations had several ways of engaging temporary assistance through staff contracts. While understanding the need for flexibility in the organizations, FICSA believed that the current ICSC contractual framework provided sufficient flexibility and that, in fact, the usage of the framework should be tightened up.

The Commission decided:

- (a) To take note of the information provided in the document;
- (b) To encourage the organizations to follow the guidelines of the framework for contractual arrangements when considering and introducing any changes to the contractual status of staff;
- (c) To request the organizations that have not implemented the ICSC contractual framework to review their contractual mechanisms in the light of the framework, taking into account experiences in other organizations, and make proposals to their respective governing bodies to align their contractual arrangements with the common system at their earliest convenience;
- (d) To continue to monitor the implementation of the ICSC framework for contractual arrangements;
- (e) To welcome the offer from the CEB/HR Network to provide a paper outlining the issues of concern that may need adjusting, notwithstanding the Network's overall satisfaction with the current framework;
- (f) To review the ICSC framework for contractual arrangements at a future session, to be determined in the light of the programme of work of the Commission.

#### **Separation payments and staff separation trends**

In its Resolution 65/248 of 2010, the General Assembly decided to revert, at its 71st session, to the Commission's recommendation regarding the introduction of end-of-service severance pay in the organizations of the common system for fixed-term staff involuntarily separating from the organization upon the expiration of their contract after 10 or more years of continuous service. In the same resolution, it also requested the Commission to promulgate guidelines for organizations to follow whenever it terminates a staff member based on an agreement of both sides.

The representatives of the three staff federations believed that end-of-service severance pay should start after five years of continuous service, with one month of base pay per year of service completed by the time of separation. In particular, FICSA pointed out that a large number of staff were separated upon expiry of their fixed-term contracts due to recent downsizing exercises by some common system organizations. UNISERV stressed that staff members on fixed-term contracts worked on core functions just as those on permanent/continuing contracts, whilst the only difference between these contract types was the fact that organizations could not issue open-ended contracts. Thus, these two groups of staff should be treated equally. The staff federations stated that they could not support the proposed guidelines for agreed terminations. Noting that the guidelines proposed a 36-month restriction of re-employment, FICSA believed that this period was too long. It also considered that the decision on the restriction period should be left for organizations to decide.

The Commission decided:

- (a) Bearing in mind the General Assembly's decision to revert to this issue at its 71st session and in view of the change in operational needs, particularly in peace-keeping as well as the resulting needs of workforce planning, to submit its earlier recommendation to the General Assembly that end-of-service severance pay be introduced for fixed-term staff separating from the organization upon the expiration of contract after 10 or more years of continuous service;

- (b) To revert to the guidelines for agreed termination at a later session; and
- (c) To use updated separation statistics in calculating non-salary related financial implications of base/floor salary scale consolidations.

### **Compensation package-related issues:**

#### ***Status of implementation of the new common system compensation package***

The representatives of the staff federations pointed out that it would be problematic to have different implementation dates. Also, it was not certain if and how the General Assembly would decide on the request from the Secretary-General to postpone implementation. CCISUA expressed its concern that one organization intended to slip on all those implementation dates that applied to the new compensation package. The staff federation was certain that these delays would mean retroactive recoveries of funds and unequal treatment of staff of different common system organizations. The representative of FICSA cautioned that differences in implementation dates and scales might also lead to problems with the Pension Fund and to further delays in that respect and, in general, to problems caused by retroactive payments.

The Commission, while expressing its concern regarding the delay in implementation by some organizations, decided to take note of the information provided by the organizations, which was thoroughly examined, and to convey the information on the status of implementation, as submitted by the organizations, to the General Assembly.

#### ***Field allowances and relocation-related payments***

The representatives of the three staff federations questioned the rationale for changing the review cycles from three to five years, especially since the organizations were nowadays undergoing frequent changes. The representatives of the staff federations also raised the issue of the hardship classification methodology for field duty stations, which merited a review. Although this was a separate matter, the Commission took note of the work currently being undertaken by its secretariat on the review of the hardship classification methodology, in particular with respect to the "A" category duty stations, on which more details would be provided at a future session.

#### ***Dependency allowances and education grant scheme***

The representative of FICSA recalled that the new education grant scheme should be implemented as of the 2017/18 school year. However, if for any reason the new system was not in place by then, the 2014/15 ceilings should be used to update the reimbursement ceilings under the current system. He also stressed that the two-year review cycle should be maintained as tuition costs continued to change quickly. It was noted that the 2010/11 ceilings had been used for five years and might be used for a sixth year, and the 2014/15 rates would be in use for at least four years if the proposed schedule was approved. That meant that the reimbursement levels would no longer reflect reality.



The Commission decided to:

- (a) Review the level of allowances under its purview as follows:
  - The scale and boarding lump sum in 2019
  - The representative schools in 2021
  - The methodology in 2020
- (b) Reiterate that the mobility incentive was subject to review for its continued need in five years from the implementation of the revised compensation package (i.e. in 2021).

### **The use of categories of staff in the United Nations common system**

At its previous (82<sup>nd</sup>) session the Commission had requested its secretariat to provide additional information on the following:

- (a) Rationale, definitions and characteristics of various categories;
- (b) Possible overlaps/gaps of functions among the various categories using ICSC job classification standards in line with Article 13 of the ICSC statute;
- (c) Review of the current criteria and guidelines for the use of the National Professional Officer (NPO) category in view of the current organizations' mandates and the related differences in the context of work;
- (d) Possible application of existing ICSC job classification standards for jobs in the Field Service (FS) category, and/or possible development of a classification standard for FS positions by the ICSC and development of appropriate criteria/principles for the use by the FS category regarding work areas/tasks; and
- (e) Career development within and across various categories.

The staff federations pointed out that the issue of the NPO category should be looked at from all angles: political, strategic and mobility and, more importantly, from the United Nations Charter, in particular Article 101 on the nature of the United Nations, geographical diversity, impartiality and maintaining the highest level of integrity and professionalism. FICSA also reiterated the need to develop or confirm, at the outset of the discussions, clear definitions for four categories (General Service, Field Service, National Professional Officer, Security Service) as this would set the parameters of the discussions. FICSA also emphasized the need for a working group to explore in detail these points and not to rush into any conclusions. FICSA expressed its strong view that non-staff should be included in the study in order to map the workforce and analyze the need for such a workforce category, and the Federation conveyed its concerns regarding non-staff performing regular staff tasks.

CCISUA emphasized the importance of realigning compensation for Security category staff with that of local law enforcement personnel, given the unique nature of their work, and welcomed the informal meeting with Commissioners on the subject. It also believed that the FS category allowed for the rapid deployment of much-needed skills to peacekeeping operations, and that the category should be maintained. With regards to NPOs, it noted from a survey conducted by the federations that their academic profile matched that of international staff and that they were increasingly asked to do comparable work, for example covering numerous countries in their region, supporting operations globally, running country offices, and taking over posts that used to be classified as international Professional. Three-quarters of NPOs had expressed dissatisfaction

with being paid lower salaries while performing international Professional work with international responsibilities. It was also clear that NPOs were less interested in expanding their category to regional or international tasks and were more interested in accessing international Professional positions, for which some organizations had unfairly created barriers.

The Commission decided to request the secretariat to:

- (a) Undertake further studies on: 1) Issues identified in the discussions at the session on various categories (General Service, Field Service, National Professional Officer and Security Service); and 2) Practices of similar international organizations on their use of internationally and locally-recruited Professional staff;
- (b) Develop options on the use of internationally recruited and locally recruited Professional staff in the United Nations common system; and
- (c) Present a report containing the information and findings on the use of categories of staff through a working group modality.

#### **Conditions of service for staff in the Professional and higher categories:**

##### ***Base/floor salary scale***

The Commission decided to recommend to the General Assembly, for approval with effect from 1 January 2017, the revised unified base/floor salary scale (annexed hereto), reflecting a 1.02 per cent adjustment over the unified salary scale previously approved by the Assembly, to be implemented by increasing the base salary and commensurately decreasing post adjustment multiplier points, resulting in no change in net take-home pay.

The Commission also decided to approve pay protection points in conjunction with the new salary scale.

##### ***Evolution of the United Nations/United States net remuneration margin***

The Commission will: 1) Report to the General Assembly that the margin between the net remuneration of United Nations officials in the Professional and higher categories in New York and that of officials in comparable positions in the United States federal civil service in Washington, D.C. was estimated at 114.1 for the calendar year 2016; and 2) Continue monitoring the level of the margin and take the necessary corrective action under the operation of the post adjustment system should the trigger levels of 113 or 117 be breached in 2017.

##### ***Cost-of-living surveys***

Representatives of staff federations took note of the secretariat's stated intention of continuing its consultations with the established local survey committees in all aspects of the preparations for and administration of the forthcoming baseline cost-of-living surveys, and pledged their full cooperation to ensure a higher level of staff member participation in the surveys. However, they requested clarification regarding the precise geographical boundaries of the canton of Vaud to be used for price and rent survey data collection, and suggested that the boundary should be limited to the area closest to Geneva frequented by United Nations staff, namely, the prefecture of Nyon and surrounding areas in the southern part of the canton.

The Chair of the ACPAQ clarified that the list of outlets and the associated geographical coverage for price and rent data collection for the cost-of-living survey in Geneva was to be decided in consultation with the Geneva Local Survey Committee. With regard to neighbourhoods considered for rent data collection, the Chair clarified that rent data collection was to be conducted by the International Service for Remunerations and Pensions in accordance with its methodology, and that, in this regard, the treatment of Geneva as a duty station would not differ in any way from that of New York, where selected areas outside the limits of New York City in Westchester County and New Jersey were included by the International Service in rent surveys.

The Commission decided:

- (a) To approve the revised list of items, together with their specifications, while granting the secretariat the flexibility to make further minor revisions, subject to the approval of the Chair of the Commission, prior to its finalization before the launch of the 2016 round of surveys;
- (b) To take note of the Committee's recommendations with regard to the revised data collection forms to be used in the 2016 round of surveys;
- (c) To approve the proposed procedures and guidelines for data collection for the baseline cost-of-living surveys at headquarters duty stations, as recommended by the Committee;
- (d) That the staff expenditures surveys at headquarters duty stations and Washington, D.C., should be addressed to all eligible staff and that the data collected be used for the derivation of common expenditure weights, on the basis of the guidelines provided by the Committee;
- (e) To include staff at the D-2 grade in the population of staff eligible for the Commission's cost-of-living surveys, starting with the 2016 round of surveys;
- (f) To call for the active cooperation of organizations and staff federations through the established local survey committees, with the secretariat, in order to ensure the successful conduct of the surveys and the achievement of the desired high response rates;
- (g) To approve the Committee's recommendation that, if response rates are insufficient, estimates of common expenditure weights, for the 2016 round of surveys only, be derived from 2010 common expenditure weights updated with relevant national consumer price indices;
- (h) To approve the changes to the basic heading structure of the post adjustment index, with effect from the 2016 round of surveys, as recommended by the Committee;
- (i) To approve the schedule of the 2016 place-to-place surveys, as recommended by the Committee; and
- (j) To approve the proposed agenda for the thirty-ninth session of the Advisory Committee on Post Adjustment Questions.

### **Report on gender balance in the United Nations common system**

FICSA fully supported gender equality. It believed, however, that the issue was better implementation of policies and gender-balanced recruitment in some organizations and specifically at certain grades. In addition, the ICSC needed to look at equal gender representation at all levels of United Nations organizations (i.e. headquarters and field duty stations), particularly in the field and hardship duty stations where women were under-represented at the United Nations (21.7%). Moreover, it noted that the current statistics provided by the Secretariat were outdated, and that one needed to take a better look at updated numbers to address the root causes of the problems where they existed. At the same time it recognized the United Nations

Charter with regard to equal treatment, and believed that improved transparency in the recruitment process could further assist in achieving the objective of gender parity in the United Nations common system.

The Commission decided to:

- (a) Take note of the information provided in the present report made with regard to available gender policies and measures towards achieving the goal of 50/50 gender balance in the Professional and higher categories in organizations of the United Nations common system;
- (b) Urge organizations to continue implementing existing gender balance policies and measures, including the previous recommendations of the Commission outlined in its previous Annual Reports, A/61/30, A/63/30, A/64/30, A/65/30 and A/69/30, as approved by the General Assembly;
- (c) Request its secretariat to continue reviewing holistically all issues relating to inclusiveness and diversity such as gender parity, geographical distribution, multiculturalism, generational diversity and multilingualism; and
- (d) Request its secretariat to provide a report on inclusiveness and diversity at its 85th session in conjunction with the upcoming report on monitoring the progress in achieving gender and geographical balance in the organizations as a part of a comprehensive report on diversity in the United Nations common system.

### **Conditions of service of the General Service and other locally-recruited categories**

#### ***Surveys of best prevailing conditions of employment in Geneva***

The recommended salary scale for the General Service and Language Teacher categories being 1.8 per cent lower than the scales in effect, the notional annual savings resulting from implementation are estimated at \$US 7.6 million. Given that the recommended salary scales are expected to be implemented only with regard to staff recruited on or after the date of promulgation by the Geneva-based organizations, there are no immediate savings associated with the recommendation.

#### ***Adjustment of dependency allowances following the unfreezing of allowances***

At its earlier (82<sup>nd</sup>) session the Commission had requested its secretariat to review the levels of the dependency allowances, on an *ad hoc* and one-time basis, for those locations under methodology I that had been affected by the freeze (Madrid, London, New York and Geneva).

Following that review, the recommended levels of allowances are as follows:

- (i) Madrid (interim adjustment - 1 October 2016)
  - Spouse Euros 1,373
  - Children Euros 1,050
  - Secondary dependant None
- (ii) London (interim adjustment - May 2016)
  - Spouse None
  - First dependent child Pounds sterling 1,434
  - Each additional child Pounds sterling 614



- (iii) New York (interim adjustment - November 2016)
  - Spouse \$3,727
  - Children \$2,389
  - First dependent child of a single, divorced or widowed staff member \$3,575
  - Secondary dependant \$1,359
  
- (iv) Geneva (interim adjustment - September 2016)
  - Spouse CHF 7,939
  - Children CHF 6,398
  - First dependent child of a single, divorced or widowed staff member CHF 13,183
  - Secondary dependant CHF 2,515.

The revised levels of allowances are to be recommended to the organizations with effect from the next interim adjustment to the salary scales and, in the case of London, with retroactive implementation from May 2016, the date of the first interim adjustment after the date of the lifting of the freeze by the General Assembly for the General Service and related categories.

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## Annex

Salary scale for the Professional and higher categories showing annual gross salaries and net equivalents after application of staff assessment (effective 1 January 2017)

(United States dollars)

| Level | I       | II      | III     | IV      | V       | VI      | VII     | VIII    | IX      | X       | XI      | XII     | XIII    |
|-------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| USG   |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| Gross | 192 236 |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| Net   | 142 376 |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| ASG   |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| Gross | 174 373 |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| Net   | 130 586 |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| D-2   |         | 142 544 | 145 589 | 148 637 | 151 788 | 155 018 | 158 248 | 161 479 | 164 709 | 167 939 |         |         |         |
| Net   |         | 109 281 | 111 412 | 113 546 | 115 680 | 117 812 | 119 944 | 122 076 | 124 208 | 126 340 |         |         |         |
| D-1   |         | 127 483 | 130 160 | 132 837 | 135 506 | 138 183 | 140 857 | 143 529 | 146 207 | 148 880 | 151 648 | 154 483 | 157 320 |
| Net   |         | 96 865  | 98 738  | 100 612 | 102 486 | 104 354 | 106 228 | 108 100 | 109 970 | 111 845 | 113 716 | 115 588 | 117 459 |
| P-5   |         | 107 459 | 109 734 | 112 011 | 114 284 | 116 561 | 118 834 | 121 113 | 123 387 | 125 663 | 127 937 | 130 214 | 132 486 |
| Net   |         | 84 721  | 86 314  | 87 908  | 89 499  | 91 093  | 92 684  | 94 279  | 95 871  | 97 464  | 99 056  | 100 650 | 102 240 |
| P-4   |         | 88 351  | 90 374  | 92 396  | 94 418  | 96 441  | 98 462  | 100 529 | 102 724 | 104 919 | 107 114 | 109 314 | 111 504 |
| Net   |         | 70 647  | 72 184  | 73 721  | 75 258  | 76 795  | 78 331  | 79 870  | 81 407  | 82 943  | 84 480  | 86 020  | 87 553  |
| P-3   |         | 72 478  | 74 349  | 76 221  | 78 091  | 79 964  | 81 836  | 83 707  | 85 582  | 87 451  | 89 324  | 91 199  | 93 068  |
| Net   |         | 58 583  | 60 005  | 61 428  | 62 849  | 64 273  | 65 695  | 67 117  | 68 542  | 69 963  | 71 386  | 72 811  | 74 232  |
| P-2   |         | 55 955  | 57 629  | 59 303  | 60 976  | 62 651  | 64 328  | 66 003  | 67 674  | 69 350  | 71 022  | 72 696  | 74 374  |
| Net   |         | 46 026  | 47 298  | 48 570  | 49 842  | 51 115  | 52 389  | 53 662  | 54 932  | 56 206  | 57 477  | 58 749  | 60 024  |
| P-1   |         | 43 371  | 44 672  | 45 973  | 47 275  | 48 575  | 49 877  | 51 287  | 52 708  | 54 129  | 55 551  | 56 971  | 58 391  |
| Net   |         | 35 998  | 37 078  | 38 158  | 39 238  | 40 317  | 41 398  | 42 478  | 43 558  | 44 638  | 45 719  | 46 798  | 47 877  |

Abbreviations: ASG, Assistant Secretary-General; USG, Under-Secretary-General.