

FICSA CIRCULAR



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

From: Gemma Vestal, General Secretary

REPORT ON THE FEDERATION'S PARTICIPATION IN THE 64TH SESSION OF THE UN JOINT STAFF PENSION BOARD (UNJSPB)

(UNOV Vienna, 24 to 28 July 2017)

Submitted by Mr. Diab El-Tabari, FICSA President

The 64th session of the UN Joint Staff Pension Board (UNJSPB) was held at the United Nations Office in Vienna (UNOV) from 24 to 28 July 2017. The President of FICSA attended the Board meeting as an observer and delivered a statement on 28 July on behalf of the three Federations.¹ A major reason for having one joint statement delivered to the Board was due to the absence of UNISERV and the prevention of the CCISUA observer from attending the meeting.

The FICSA observer normally attends the meetings of the Participants Group, i.e. the representatives of participants in the Pension Fund.

The Participants Group discussed the issue of the alleged conflict of two elected members of the UN Staff Pension Committee, who are Pension Fund secretariat staff (Ms. Michelle Rockcliffe and Mr. Ibrahim Faye), from attending, and after two days of deliberations the Group decided not to allow them to attend the meetings of the Participants Group given that the Fund's Standing Committee had decided that there was a conflict of interest preventing these two Pension Fund secretariat staff members from attending the Pension Board meeting. The CEO of the Fund had also refused to allow Ms. Rockcliffe to attend the Board meeting in her other capacity as a CCISUA observer. The issue is currently at the UN Administrative Tribunal (UNAT). This issue of refusing staff federation's the right to designate the representative of their choice to attend Board meetings under recognized observer status will also be raised at the Fifth Committee.

Mr. John Levins was elected spokesperson of the Participants Group, succeeding Mr. Imed Zabaar who had been the Group's spokesperson for the 63rd session.

¹ Published as FICSA/CIRC/1272.

Mr. Brett Fitzgerald, also from the Participants Group, was elected 1st Vice Chairman of the Pension Board's 64th session.

The Participants Group nominated its representatives to serve on the following committees:

- Assets and Liabilities Monitoring Committee (ALM Committee): Ms. Kathrine Bruchmann for a one-year term and Florian Leger for a four-year term);
- Audit Committee: Ms. Ndeye Ndiaye to serve from August 2017 to December 2021; and
- Contact Group to provide input to the Fund secretariat relative to the ICSC study on pensionable remuneration: Mr. Brett Fitzgerald and Mr. Imed Zabaar.

The Board endorsed all of the above nominations.

Discussions on the investment of the Fund's assets took place, and the participants noted the improved real rate of return for this year. However, the cumulative return over the last three years remained less than the benchmark.

The OIOS Report 2017/2 regarding the backlog in the payment of new benefits as well as the audit report were both discussed. It was apparent that many recommendations remain open.

The status of delayed payments to new retirees was revisited and, although we note with regret that no further improvement has been proposed to provide provisional payments, we have to put on record the hard work exerted to process as many cases as possible and the improved overall processing of cases. However, individual cases still need to be brought to the attention of the Pension Fund secretariat as the need arises.

The proposed budget for the biennium 2018-2019 was reviewed, and it was observed that a considerable number of additional staff were being requested in the new biennium. As such, the budget was approved by the Board. In FICSA's view, the additional operational posts to provide improved service delivery are necessary, but we question the need for additional top heavy administrative posts. We believe that the posts provided by the General Assembly in 2016 for a period of one year were enough to address the needs.

The issue of lack of staff/management relations was mentioned, and we note with concern that there has not been any improvement over the last year.

Regarding the proposed extension of the appointment of the CEO for another 5-year term, it was discussed extensively within the meetings of the Participants Group where FICSA provided its views. The final decision was to extend the CEO's contract for three more years as the second and last extension, subject to the UN Secretary-General's approval.

Board members expressed their dissatisfaction regarding the late availability of Pension Board documents.

The 64th Pension Board meeting concluded at approximately 5:30 pm on 28 July 2017.
