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Item 5 of the agenda

**FOLLOW-UP TO DECISIONS AND RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED  
BY THE EXECUTIVE BOARD AND THE GENERAL CONFERENCE  
AT THEIR PREVIOUS SESSIONS**

**PART V**

**HUMAN RESOURCES ISSUES**

**ADDENDUM**

**COMMENTS BY THE UNESCO STAFF UNION (STU)**

Pursuant to Item 9.2.E of the UNESCO Administrative Manual, the UNESCO Staff Union (STU) submits its comments on the reports by the Director-General.

As a general introductory comment, STU would like to express its concern about the **increasing deterioration of working conditions and benefits**, in particular of long-acquired rights, that staff at UNESCO and, indeed, in the entire United Nations system are enduring at an ever-increasing rate.

While STU understands that this reduction of rights is justified by the International Civil Service Commission and United Nations management in general as a result of the financial limitations the entire United Nations system is faced with in recent years, this justification is somewhat in contradiction with United Nations (and UNESCO) management's concern and statements that it is becoming increasingly hard to attract and retain top talent and well experienced professionals to its workforce.

How can these much sought-after professionals be attracted and/or retained if the working conditions which, in addition to vocation and dedication, made working for the United Nations and UNESCO attractive are either no longer available or being significantly reduced?

**Under such circumstances, it should not come as any surprise that an important "brain drain" has been observed in the United Nations and UNESCO staff in recent years and that many individuals have taken the decision or are increasingly thinking about leaving the international civil service for other employment where their talents, experience and expertise are being better recognized and rewarded. This is clearly not in the "best interests" of any Organization, especially an intellectual United Nations agency like UNESCO.**

**A. Annual report (2014) by the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC): Report by the Director-General**

(Follow-up to 114 EX/Decision 8.5, 22 C/Resolution 37, 37 C/Resolution 83, 194 EX/Decision 5 (III))

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**Mandatory age of separation**

STU is fully in favor of going ahead with the General Assembly decision at its 68th session to implement 65 as the mandatory age of separation for existing staff.

United Nations common system organizations use 60 as the age of separation for staff recruited before 1990, age 62 for staff recruited after 1990, and age 65 for staff recruited after 1 January 2014. A unified age of separation at 65 effective 1 January 2016 needs to be adopted, while respecting staff's right to retire at 60 (if recruited before 1990) and 62 (if recruited after 1990).

STU wishes to highlight that any measure taken in respect of the mandatory age of separation or the normal age of retirement should be implemented without prejudice to the acquired rights of the staff already on board. An extension beyond age 60 or 62 should not affect entitlement to the full pension at age 60 or 62 respectively.

**Gender balance in the United Nations common system**

STU is concerned by the poor situation of gender balance at UNESCO.

Gender equality and women's empowerment is one of UNESCO's ongoing global priorities. It is also an all-UN development goal. However, women at UNESCO still have a harder time than men attaining managerial positions. In spite of the Executive Board's recommendations, they struggle to enjoy equal treatment.

STU wishes to raise your attention on the following measures taken by the Administration which have not helped the Organization create an affable environment for women.

- During the redeployment process, **68%** of staff affected by abolition of posts were women.
- This surely had an impact on the fact that **65%** of staff who opted for the voluntary mutual separation programme were women.
- More recently, women have lost 20% of maternity leave since the release of the Administrative Circular AC/HR/42 published on 1 October 2014.

STU asks the Director-General to ensure good working conditions for women and that any new measures implemented should not prejudice acquired rights of women staff already on board. STU asks for the withdrawal of Administrative Circular AC/HR/42.

STU asks the Director-General to improve gender parity in particular at senior and director grades, while recalling that appointments are first and foremost made on the basis of competence and merit.

**B. Feasibility study on introducing a new health insurance scheme**

Follow-up to 190 EX/Decision 32, 191 EX/Decision 29

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1. STU notes that the Administration has already reported on this issue in 194 EX/5 Part III, when it promised to report on the progress or conclusions of the United Nations study at the 2015 spring session of the Executive Board. At that time, in 194 EX/5 Part III Add., STU already expressed its relief that funds would not be wasted to finance a study for a new health insurance scheme that is inimical to the resolution of the real problems of the MBF and the After-Service Health Insurance (ASHI). STU reiterates that such a scheme would create more problems than it would solve, and it would certainly not reduce the current ASHI liability. The only solution to that is to start funding it.
2. STU regrets the continuing emphasis put by the Administration on the “financial problems” which the MBF faced “for many years” and which is misleading. The Fund had a deficit for six years, from 2006 to 2011, due to the fact that for 16 years (!), from 1996 to 2012, contributions had not increased. This happened despite the General Assembly of Participants repeatedly drawing the attention of the Director-General to the problem. The generally accepted medical costs inflation rate is 5%, while salaries and pensions increase at only 2%. Therefore increases in contributions should be anticipated every 4-6 years. Consequently, since the increase in contributions in 2012 there has no longer been a deficit. STU is further concerned that the Administration continues to stress the increasing proportion of voluntary participants (retired staff) in the Fund in relation to the active staff, as though UNESCO were unique in facing this situation; yet it affects all the international and intergovernmental organizations, as well as most national health systems.
3. STU is pleased to note that the Administration expects to be able to report to the new MBF's Advisory Board by the end of 2015. However STU finds it unacceptable that since the last meeting of the former MBF's Board of Management in October 2013 no meetings of any kind to exercise staff's rights in the management of the Fund have been convened, and requests for meetings by elected representatives to that Board have been ignored. Elections for the new Advisory Board were announced for 2 February 2015. They have not taken place. And there has been no information about when they may take place. The Administration's neglect of – nay, disrespect for – the participants who are co-owners of the Fund, which has been autonomous since its creation in 1948, is surely not acceptable.