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

PART III

HUMAN RESOURCES ISSUES

ADDENDUM

COMMENTS BY THE UNESCO STAFF UNION (STU)

Pursuant to Item 9.2.E.7 of the UNESCO Human Resources Manual, the UNESCO Staff Union (STU) submits its comments on the report by the Director-General.



A. Implementation of the Human Resources Management Strategy 2017-2022
(Follow-up to 207 EX/Dec.5.IV.B and 40 C/Res.78)

Recruitment

The UNESCO Staff Union (STU) is pleased that the new updated recruitment policy has contributed to the reduction of recruitment time, but still calls for the **restoration of internal recruitment** before external publication and the consideration of possible criteria so as to include PA colleagues on longstanding Project Appointments (PAs) in this procedure. This would once more give the staff a chance to develop professionally, which at present is very rare in our Organization.

STU regrets that recruitment procedures are not as harmonized as the Bureau of Human Resources Management (ADM/HRM) claims. The delegation of recruitment authority to Assistant Directors-General (ADGs) for grades P-1 to P-4 does not promote the harmonization of recruitment processes: there is a real risk that the sectors apply their own rules.

The introduction of Appointment Review Boards (ARBs), which replace Advisory Boards on Individual Personnel Matters (PABs) for appointments, makes the recruitment process even more opaque: STU no longer has access to information and is therefore no longer in a position to react in the event of violations of the rules. The members of the ARBs designated by the staff associations are in fact bound to maintain confidentiality and are, contrary to all logic, not entitled to communicate with the very body that appointed them, thus preventing them from playing their role in full.

Even if the STU President is informed of the posts submitted to the ARBs and the name of the member designated by STU charged with examining them, STU still requests the **outright waiver of confidentiality** for the members of the ARBs designated by the staff associations vis-à-vis those associations. This will make the recruitment process more transparent which would be to the benefit of all, Organization and staff members alike.

Mobility

As a reminder, STU has always been **in favour of mobility**, which offers UNESCO staff the possibility of new professional experiences.

Nevertheless, from the beginning, STU has requested:

- that **a list of clear and objective criteria be established and published;**
- that mobility be linked to **career development** in order to increase its attractiveness, especially for staff members who have reached the highest level within their grades;
- that mobility be a part of a **programmatic framework.**

At the end of the 2019 exercise, STU conducted a survey on the subject among colleagues concerned; the results, dated 4 October 2019, revealed their deep dissatisfaction. In particular, they criticized the improvised, arbitrary, stressful and demotivating nature of the exercise, which was carried out without any precise, clear and transparent criteria, in total ignorance of the individual's skills and was of no use in career development. Many of these findings are reflected in the evaluation conducted by the Internal Oversight Service (IOS), whose proposed recommendations STU welcomes.

According to STU, one of the most worrying findings of the evaluation conducted by IOS relates to the **expertise of staff**. It appears, in effect, that the ADGs are divided on the subject, with some considering it to be one of UNESCO's comparative advantages and a source of its credibility, and others considering that it is necessary to be versatile in the field. These differences of opinion have led to very different perceptions and implementation of mobility from one sector to another and, in

particular, to an unfair management of operational deferments. Staff experienced frustration and a sense of injustice due to this.

Furthermore, the evaluation conducted by IOS shows an **absolute lack of support** by the Administration for the staff involved in the mobility exercise. This exercise was in fact only intended to move staff members, with no link to the programmatic framework or skills management, which should have included discussions about career development and training.

In view of the comments it has already made on several occasions, STU cannot but endorse recommendations No. 6 (“Adjust timing on decision and notification”), No. 7 (“Facilitate relocation”) and No. 8 (“Ensure quality handover”) of the evaluation conducted by IOS. STU also strongly supports recommendation No. 9 of the evaluation, according to which: **“Staff members should be allowed to express interest for at least one higher-level post.”**

At the same time, STU requests that in the future:

- the posts of staff members volunteering for mobility be included in the pool of available posts;
- the mobility schedule be adjusted, with the date of notification of the decision known six months prior to the date of transfer;
- ADM/HRM be equipped with the staff and tools needed to deal with the work overload generated by transfers;
- support be provided to staff members' spouses, in obtaining not only residence visas but also work visas at duty stations that permit it, together with guidance in finding employment.

Training

STU deplores the absence of a systematic and comprehensive training and skills development plan for all staff since 2012, and hopes that the vote for an increased budget by the last Executive Board will help to remedy this situation. Furthermore, while almost all the training courses arbitrarily offered by UNESCO are online, it is face-to-face training that is preferable since it allows for feedback from others.

Staff also find it difficult to make time to attend these training sessions in light of their workload. STU therefore recommends the establishment of a personal training account that would give staff members time and budget allocations. This would be beneficial for staff and the Organization.

Finally, STU regrets that the few initiatives put in place to develop the skills and capacities of staff for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have essentially targeted senior management, even though the Professional and General Service Staff categories that execute the programmes also need them.

Post classification

STU deeply regrets the Director-General’s decision to abolish Staff Rule 102.2 entitled “Compatibility with classification standards”, which allows each eligible staff member to request the reclassification of his or her post. This decision follows the freeze on post reclassifications decided by the Deputy Director-General in August 2018. Despite the annulment of this decision in December 2018, requests have remained blocked for many months in the Office of the Director-General, resulting in a de facto or even de jure freeze.

The decision to abolish Staff Rule 102.2 was taken against the advice of the staff associations, the Advisory Council on Personnel Policies (ACPP) and **Member States**. The new post classification

policy is not a step forward for UNESCO and its staff members, since the right to request equal pay for equal work is now severely reduced and limited to a specific period of time: in fact, paragraph 10 of Administrative Circular AC/HR/74 stipulates that “*Requests for the reclassification of occupied posts are submitted: (a) Once every biennium, following the approval of the Programme and Budget (C/5), between 1 January and 30 April of the first year of the biennium, in the implementation of the staffing proposals for the staff establishment of the Sector/Bureau/Field Office; (b) Every year, between 1st February and 30 April, if as a result of the setting of performance objectives and the career discussion, the supervisors find that the duties and responsibilities of the post have changed substantially and may warrant a change in grade level*”. The possibility of requesting a post reclassification offered colleagues one last means of advancement in an organization where career development does not exist. That is another right that is being taken away from them.

Performance Management

STU does not share the Administration’s expectation that the new annual performance appraisal cycle will increase confidence between supervisors and staff members, and is not convinced that the change in cycle is likely to bring about significant substantive changes to the performance appraisal system.

Furthermore, STU calls for the establishment of **systematic evaluations by staff members of their supervisors**, and for measures to combat reprisals.

Finally, STU will be pay very close attention to the announced revision of contesting performance appraisals, **which should not be another means of suppressing colleagues’ right of appeal**.

Geographical distribution and gender parity

STU regrets again the decrease in the representation of Member States within the Secretariat, the percentage of countries represented having fallen from 81% in January 2018 to 78% in June 2019. STU also regrets that Group I countries are even more over-represented.

With regard to gender parity, much remains to be done and concrete measures and incentives are needed to encourage the recruitment of women to senior posts (P-5 and above) where they are under-represented.

Revised Statutes of the Appeals Board

STU was opposed to the following revisions proposed by ADM/HRM:

- reduction of the composition of the Appeals Board from five to three members;
- maintenance of the proviso “as soon as possible” with regard to the Director-General’s response.

STU has therefore noted with satisfaction that the General Conference adopted the revised Statutes of the Appeals Board incorporating the essence of its comments, in particular the maintenance of a five-member composition and the obligation to convene a session of the Appeals Board within six months of receiving the Administration’s reply. STU regrets, nevertheless, that to date, the circular formalizing these decisions has not yet been published.

Staff well-being

STU supports the human resources project to institute measures enabling staff to work in an environment that is healthy and conducive to their flourishing. STU calls for the establishment of **flexible working hours** as well as a generalized and more flexible use of **telework**, the application of which has proven beneficial to the staff and the Organization.

Right and access to sick leave in TULIP

STU regrets that ADM/HRM has decided, by information circular IC/HR/139 and without consulting the staff associations and the Advisory Council on Personnel Policies (ACPP), to restrict the ceiling on, and access to sick leave in TULIP to a daily rather than an annual basis as was the case between 2001 and 2017.

Not only does the procedure for amending this rule constitute an infringement of staff rights, its contents mean that some colleagues, already weakened by a long illness, find that they exhaust their certified sick leave entitlement. This could prevent them from undergoing the medical examinations necessary to monitor their illness. This is not acceptable.

STU therefore calls upon the Administration to **annul information circular IC/HR/139**.