

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: Diab El-Tabari, President

**STATEMENT BY
THE FEDERATION OF INTERNATIONAL CIVIL SERVANTS' ASSOCIATIONS (FICSA) AND
THE COORDINATING COMMITTEE OF INTERNATIONAL STAFF UNIONS AND ASSOCIATIONS
(CCISUA)
TO THE 82ND SESSION OF THE INTERNATIONAL CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION (ICSC)**

(United Nations, New York, 7 to 18 March 2016)

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Commission, Colleagues,

Today I'll be making the opening statement on behalf of both FICSA and CCISUA, mindful of our ever increasing cooperation.

Mr. Chairman,

As it stands today more than ever, our staff, and through them the organizations in the room today, are confronted with unprecedented and very delicate challenges, from dealing with growing political instability within countries and the consequent impact on movements of people in an interdependent world, to addressing persistent economic inequalities, and consolidating an international rules and norms-based system. Our colleagues in WHO, WFP and the UN have coordinated an ultimately successfully response to the scourge of Ebola, which they hope to repeat with the recent Zika outbreak.

These are the people who lie behind the decisions of this Commission.

Of those people, two-thirds are locally recruited. Their work makes up the backbone of our organizations' operations, and for them much is at stake.

In a system of international organizations, the role and scope of locally-recruited staff, especially those carrying out professional category functions, will be defining.

So it is important that this review be carried out transparently and each party be invited to make their intentions clear before we start.

We cannot have a repeat of a review that starts out as an exercise in simplification and then sells itself to Member States on the basis of the savings it could generate.

So here are a few concerns from our side:

First, as our organizations strive for fairness in the world and claim to put human rights up front, can a significant number of them still continue to justify the barriers they put in place to prevent capable staff moving between local and international categories?

Second, can organizations convince us to believe that global mobility is important when we are seeing a worrying rise in regional offices and global service hubs whose professional administrative posts are, apparently for cost reasons, increasingly restricted to the nationality of the host country through the incorrect application of the national professional pay scale to posts that should instead benefit from the international professional pay scale?

Third, can organizations also convince us to believe that using National Professional Officers for non-national functions has little to do with cost-cutting when such staff are only being used in low salary locations but not New York or Geneva?

Fourth, can we continue to apply the conditions of service of office staff to those working in security, who must carry a heavy load of the gear during working hours, operate in all weathers, and yet be expected to remain in peak shape and not receive a full pension until 62 or 65?

Fifth, in an environment where many commodity-dependent countries are seeing their currencies plummet in value from earlier highs, is there a more systematic way to approach the impact on local staff than the ad hoc though well-meant efforts that we've recently seen.

And lastly, can we use the opportunity of this review to take on board the concerns expressed about the methodology for the local salary survey, both in Vienna last summer with regards to the New York survey, and later today for the Geneva one. The ever-decreasing number of employers willing to share data and the difficulty of our methodology in properly capturing evolutions in how pay is awarded, begs a reform of the salary survey process.

Mr. Chairman,

Having spoken about the compensation package on which we are about to embark, let us not forget the one just completed.

We are pleased to see that the General Assembly, in its wisdom, made a number of important revisions to the ICSC's proposal, making it more beneficial to staff and also to organizations. Obviously we believe they should have gone further, but we do hope that the changes made will provide useful lessons as we engage on the new package.

We further hope that the communications strategy proposed for the just completed package will endeavour to present the situation transparently, including the slowness of steps and their

tenuous link to performance management, as well as cuts to pay for many staff once transitional measures have expired.

We too will be following implementation closely and acting in a timely manner to bring to light, where necessary, the negative effects of the changes passed last year. Changes of such a fundamental nature will require correction over time.

Mr. Chairman,

While we gather at this meeting, we should also take a moment to consider the evolution of the international civil service and the role of the ICSC.

Last Friday, in the conference room next door, a number of us here watched the presentation of the Joint Inspection Unit on the use of non-staff, meaning mainly consultants and contractors. The JIU revealed that almost half of all personnel in international organizations had non-staff contracts, yet three-quarters of those were in a de facto employment relationship, carrying out similar tasks with similar responsibilities to staff members.

Therefore Mr. Chairman, it would seem that the ICSC is unable to make an impact on a significant part of the international civil service, and, judging by the CEB's response to the JIU report, there doesn't seem much appetite to allow that to change.

Further, Mr. Chairman, you may be aware that the Director-General of the FAO has declared that he will not implement the ICSC's recommendation, confirmed by the General Assembly, to allow retirement at 65 for current staff latest 1 January 2018.

So once again, Mr. Chairman, we believe that all parties here should declare their intentions before we engage in another review, which like the previous one could do further damage to the competitiveness and attractiveness of what's left of the international civil service.

Mr. Chairman,

Ultimately the aim of these ICSC sessions is for us to work together to develop an international civil service that is productive and competitive in meeting the needs of Member States. The easy way out is to remove a benefit here, cut pay there, and to quote Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, to shave through the muscle and into the bone.

But it doesn't have to be that way.

Good leaders, clear goals, IT systems that actually work (I won't mention Umoja or the Integrated Pensions Administration System), capable managers, an attractive working environment and a truly competitive compensation package. These are part of the smart solution and we encourage everyone here to embrace it.

Mr. Chairman, on this basis, we look forward to getting on with the work of this session.

Thank you.
