

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: Gemma Vestal, General Secretary

**STATEMENT BY
THE FEDERATION OF INTERNATIONAL CIVIL SERVANTS' ASSOCIATIONS (FICSA)
TO THE FIFTH COMMITTEE OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY
AT ITS 73RD SESSION
(New York, 2 November 2018)**

Delivered by the President of FICSA, Mr. Brett Fitzgerald

Mr. Chair,
Distinguished Members of the Fifth Committee,

The ties between our staff federation, the General Assembly, the Fifth Committee, the UN secretariat and the UN common system in general go back a long way. In 1979 and 1980 the GA formally decided, in its resolutions 34/220 and 35/213, that it would henceforth receive and consider fully the views of staff through a designated official of the Federation of International Civil Servants' Associations (FICSA), and the International Civil Service Commission long ago integrated our staff federation into their Rules of Procedure.

In addition, FICSA staff members have had United Nations secretariat employment contracts going as far back as the early 1960's. The UN simply administers those four staff contracts, and FICSA reimburses fully and directly the UN for their salaries, benefits and entitlements. It was, therefore, with surprise that we learned several years ago that a UN secretariat legal officer had opined that the UN secretariat should no longer administer the employment contracts of our staff. This has led to an inordinate number of meetings and discussions which have negatively impacted our Federation.

Created in 1952 and recognized by the General Assembly, the Fifth Committee and the International Civil Service Commission, FICSA has consistently played an integral role in the UN common system. To ensure that FICSA will be able to continue to do so, we respectfully seek a decision from this distinguished Committee and the General Assembly explicitly authorizing the UN Secretary-General, from within existing resources, to: 1) continue to provide and administer UN secretariat contracts for FICSA staff as per the long-established practice; and 2) continue to provide FICSA with the relevant facilities. Such a decision from the General Assembly would formally recognize the long-established practice.

I would now like to briefly address several other issues which are of significant importance to staff which include the International Civil Service Commission, the increasing use of non-staff contracts; the UN Joint Staff Pension Fund and staff/management relations.

In respect of the recent cost-of-living exercises and resulting post adjustment indices, it is our duty to inform that between 2,000 and 3,000 Professional and higher category staff in Geneva have filed legal appeals to contest the Organizations' implementation of the related ICSC decisions. Nonetheless, FICSA will actively participate in the upcoming ICSC review of the post adjustment system, including both the methodology and operational rules. We will also actively participate in the ICSC review of the General Service salary survey methodology which we trust will not be driven by cost-saving measures but rather by a genuine interest to address and resolve the issues reported by the various local survey committees.

At the same time the staff federations are participating in informal talks with the Commission on the review of the consultative process and ICSC working arrangements. We were informed that several days ago the ICSC secretariat updated its Rules of Procedure on their website to incorporate the changes as decided by the Commission back in 1998 and subsequently noted by the General Assembly. It is FICSA's view that this is a first step in the right direction, and we look forward to continued informal talks on the consultative process.

FICSA is of the view that the UN Joint Staff Pension Fund is perhaps one of the strongest pillars of the common system. Having served as a member of the Pension Board for several years, I read with interest the report of the OIOS on its audit of the governance structure and related processes of the UN Joint Staff Pension Board. Although many of the OIOS recommendations were accepted by the Board, some failed to adequately recognize the inter-agency nature of the Pension Board, as highlighted by the General Assembly in earlier resolutions. Furthermore, we believe it would have been more helpful to ensure reasonable professional care to obtain sufficient evidence to support the conclusions drawn. A comparison of the governance structure of the UN Joint Staff Pension Board with that of other pension boards would have rendered the audit more useful.

Lastly, FICSA would like to express our members' concerns in respect of the status of staff/management relations in several common system organizations. Although my predecessors have already alerted you to this matter, as the issues remain unresolved we believe that this merits further discussion.

In closing, allow me to say that FICSA welcomes the opportunity to interact informally with the distinguished representatives of the Member States to help us to better understand your objectives as well as concerns. For this purpose, I will be reaching out to many of you during the next couple weeks and hope that we will be able to discuss informally some of the issues which I have raised here today.

Mr. Chair,
Distinguished Members of the Fifth Committee,

I thank you for your kind attention and wish you a successful outcome of your discussions.
