

FICSA CIRCULAR



FICSA/CIRC/1258
Ref: Offorg/ICSC

Geneva, 11 April 2017

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) AND
THE COORDINATING COMMITTEE OF INTERNATIONAL STAFF UNIONS AND ASSOCIATIONS
(CCISUA)
TO THE 84TH SESSION OF THE INTERNATIONAL CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION (ICSC)**

(United Nations, New York, 20 to 31 March 2017)

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Commission, Colleagues,

Today I speak on behalf of FICSA and CCISUA, our two federations united by a single purpose to promote and defend the rights of our staff, many in some of the world's most difficult and dangerous duty stations.

We welcome Mr. Mohammed Farashuddin and pay our condolences to the family of Mr. Mohamed M. Quayes who was instrumental on a number of key ICSC decisions in the past years. We will certainly miss his wit, wisdom and erudition.

We have a busy agenda but allow me to highlight a few points of concern that we'll elaborate on further during the next two weeks.

Firstly, allow me to welcome the statement delivered by the Chef de Cabinet. It is clear that cutting the pay of staff with working spouses and children, year-on-year, will cut morale and send a signal that however hard the staff work, their efforts are less and less appreciated. We would like to suggest that a review of this matter be added to the agenda of this session.

Mr. Chairman,

We welcome the Commission's agreement to our proposal to re-examine the hardship classification methodology. While many of our staff are confronted by a deteriorating security situation, we also need to recognize other factors such as lack of healthcare, isolation, increasing levels of air pollution and new hazards related to climate change. We look forward to continuing our cooperation with the Commission in this regard.

And Mr. Chairman, while I am on this topic, I hope you had time during your mission to Bhutan to meet with the Royal Civil Service Commission. As you would have learnt, isolation is an important factor in their hardship classification system with the key measurement being the number of days by foot to the closest road.

With regards to the role of different categories of staff, we remain concerned at attempts to change the criteria for the use of National Professional Officers (NPOs). The staff federations believe the current criteria remains largely relevant within the underlying context of increasing national capacities. Moving away from that context would blur the line between national and international Professional staff, would raise issues of equal pay for work of equal value and erode the international character of the common system organizations.

Indeed, Mr. Chairman, National Professional Officers are very uncomfortable with attempts to employ them on national salaries for international tasks. In a recent survey of NPOs, 72 per cent felt uncomfortable with their salaries being set on a national rather than a global basis.

At the same time, we welcome discussion on how to provide a clear career ladder for General Service and National Professional Officers into the international professional category, as many of these colleagues are overqualified for their current roles and have an important role to play at the global level. We also support the maintenance of the field service category which, in today's increasingly troubled political context in many parts of the world, has continued to prove its worth.

This session sees the presentation of the results of the 2016 place-to-place surveys. The negative results almost everywhere show that a number of factors need to be addressed. Copy-pasting data from the European Commission, which covers the spending and family patterns of European civil servants, is not necessarily appropriate for the needs of our more diverse workforce. We also need to address the declining rent spiral, whereby staff move further out of city centres to find more affordable housing with their new locations becoming the basis on which post adjustment is then set, leading to yet further exodus. We also need to question the basis for which rent data is used to distort out-of-area weighting.

Mr. Chairman,

In the current political environment it is important that the common system be seen to operate with full integrity. Steps are being taken by various organizations to improve policies on protecting whistleblowers from retaliation, so as to avoid a 15 per cent cut to contributions by the US. However, while some organizations have made improvements, the failure of other organizations to improve their policies tarnishes the reputation of the whole system. We would like to suggest, and we wrote to you a month ago on this, that a comparative review of whistleblower policies be undertaken by the Commission.

Finally, we remain concerned that a number of common system organizations have yet to announce their implementation dates for the Commission's decision, approved by the General Assembly, that the mandatory age of separation be raised to 65 with respect of acquired rights.
