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Item 4.2 of the provisional agenda

RECOMMENDATIONS BY THE EXECUTIVE BOARD ON THE DRAFT PROGRAMME AND BUDGET FOR 2014-2017

DECISION 192 EX/16 IMPLEMENTATION OF 191 EX/DECISION 15 ON THE DRAFT MEDIUM-TERM STRATEGY (37 C/4) AND DRAFT PROGRAMME AND BUDGET (37 C/5), AND 5 X/EX/DECISION 2

PART I

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE PLAN AS WELL AS THE RESTRUCTURING PLAN BASED ON THE EXPECTED CASHFLOW OF US \$507 MILLION FOR 2014-2015

COMMENTS BY THE UNESCO STAFF UNION (STU)

Pursuant to Item 9.2.E of the UNESCO Human Resources Manual,
the UNESCO Staff Union (STU) submits its comments on these
recommendations by the Executive Board.

1. STU takes note of document 37 C/6 Add. and Corr., including 192 EX/Decision 16, Part I and hereby makes the following comments.
2. STU notes that the Executive Board recommends that the US \$507 million expenditure plan be adopted by the General Conference. However, as presented to the Executive Board, this will have severe consequences for UNESCO programmes and staff since a whopping number of 285 posts need to be abolished, which represents 16.4% compared to the initial 37 C/5 proposed, and 23.1% (438 posts) compared to the 36 C/5 document. While the financial situation of the Organization warrants restructuring and realigning of programmes and resources, including staff,

this large number of posts to be abolished at once represents a major demotivating factor for UNESCO's personnel. Moreover, how this figure was arrived at is far from being clearly explained and, more importantly, justified.

3. STU's position is and has always been that employment security be the utmost consideration in any process of reform, restructuring and downsizing.

4. STU is concerned that the proposed reduction in posts is purely based on financial considerations and numbers rather than well-presented and cohesive restructuring and redirection of the Organization's mandate, objectives, programmes, priorities and structure. In brief, there is no overarching reform element presented and it is therefore impossible to see the relation between the proposed reduction in staff and the overall reorientation and reform referred to but not explained.

5. STU is further concerned and disappointed that the Executive Board instead of recommending that a new, clear, transparent and well-developed restructuring plan be presented to its next session, simply contents itself to request, in paragraph 9 of its recommendation to the General Conference, the Director-General to present, at its 194th session, a simple report on movements of staff and separations resulting from her supposed but non-existing or transmitted restructuring plan.

6. STU is afraid that these movements of staff and separations which will not be based on any coherent and logical programmatic and organic reform and clearly set objectives will lead to arbitrary decisions based either on purely financial considerations or, even worse, personal issues.

7. While the Executive Board as well as the Director-General often repeat that staff is the most valuable asset of the Organization, this decision and recommendation by the Executive Board clearly takes the role of staff as well as their professionalism, competences, contribution to the implementation of UNESCO's work and intellectual expertise very lightly.

8. STU recognizes and agrees with the importance that Member States place on the issue of geographical distribution and balance, but given the current situation the preservation of both the employment and expertise of current staff is of vital precedence. To achieve this, it is necessary to ensure an immediate and absolute stopping of all external recruitments (even those considered as mission critical) until all staff affected by post abolitions have been identified and offered a redeployment solution. Current UNESCO staff have a range of qualifications, experience and abilities that are very well suited for any variety of posts in the Organization. STU has been demanding for a long time, and this is now more critical than ever, that an assessment of competencies exercise be conducted by the Organization (and not just a self-assessment) for all staff members before any redeployment and/or abolition of posts is implemented. It is clearly in the interest of the Organization to know what the competencies of its staff are in order to match them appropriately with the needs of its programmes and objectives, particularly in this time of financial austerity and maximization of available resources. The recently introduced "MyTalent" tool is simply an improved CV/self-assessment of competencies and in no way can it be considered a professional and comprehensive objective assessment of competencies of UNESCO staff.

9. STU takes note of the Executive Board request to the Director-General (paragraph 10) to envisage reducing the upper tier of the Organization ("Assistant Director-Generals and Directors") which can have important savings consequences but should also be conducted in line with a clear overall restructuring plan. This said, STU fears that the vague language that this request is presented in is not binding and thus may lead to an Administration's decision by which most staff savings will be at the expense of mid-level professionals and general service and not at management level. It is important that reductions in staff costs be equally and fairly distributed across all levels of staff, including senior management. This applies as well to issues such as renewing staff contracts beyond the statutory age of retirement and Member States should be particularly vigilant of this, particularly when senior management is concerned. The use of "exceptional cases" clauses cannot be accepted (paragraph 7).

10. Finally, and as repeatedly stated on various occasions, **it is essential that any restructuring plan in which abolition of posts and staff are included be fully justified and presented together with a restructuring plan which clearly delineates the new objectives, priorities, programmes, activities and, above all, the organizational structure from which the staff abolitions and/or redeployments emanate.** There can be no other way that the Member States, management and staff can have clear information other than the presentation of a comprehensive and fully justified and concise restructuring plan. It is in the best common interest of staff, of Member States and, most importantly, of UNESCO.