



STU/65th Council/13/034

6 December 2013

Madam Director-General,

The UNESCO Staff Union (STU), like all the staff of UNESCO, is more than ever deeply concerned by the restructuring that has already started and the post cuts to come. Despite the various requests made by the STU and your “determination to spare no effort to maintain jobs, while minimizing the impact of the financial situation on the staff as a whole” (your memo DG/13/6340 of 4 October 2013), the Administration’s commitment to preserve, as far as possible, the jobs of our colleagues has been strongly challenged by the actions carried out in a manner that continues to lack transparency and equality.

Despite the many exchanges and correspondence between you and STU, there remain critical issues we should like to be able to discuss with you as soon as possible. They concern in particular the following points:

1. Lack of consultation of the staff and staff associations

As to the form, STU was not informed officially of the dispatch of the memo dated 27 November 2013 concerning the staffing proposals for 2014-2015 addressed by ADG/BSP and DIR/HRM to the members of the Senior Management Team (SMT) and directors and heads of field offices, even though on that same day STU had a meeting with DIR/HRM.

As to the substance, comprehensive, egalitarian and transparent consultations with staff on proposals regarding structure, staffing and post abolition have still not taken place, either before or after publication of the 27 November 2013 memo, despite the assurances given to STU and the instructions issued in recent months on the obligation to consult staff. Once again, the exercise is being conducted in the greatest opacity and the staff are still being presented with a done deal and given unequal treatment. In spite of the fact that the structural charts including staff assigned to the structures have already been drawn up and are being modified subsequent to the 27 November 2013 memo, no information has been divulged and there has been no consultation of the staff. The answer often given by supervisors to staff members is “we don’t know anything, nothing has been decided”. On the other hand, some staff members have already been informed that their posts will be abolished while others have benefited from post changes before the redeployment exercise (see point 3 below).

If structural charts including staff members have not already been drawn up gradually in recent months and weeks, there is every reason to be concerned (i) as to the way in which the exercise might be carried out in such a short space of time as between 27 November and 16 December 2013 and (ii) by whom it will be conducted, since most of the ADGs taking part in the exercise are on the verge of leaving the Organization, and in some sectors the restructuring is being carried out mainly by acting EO and AO chiefs (case of the Natural Sciences Sector, for instance).

Furthermore, STU was neither informed nor consulted about meetings between sector managers and HRM and BFM concerning the restructuring, and neither has it been informed or consulted about your meetings with, for example, SHS on 6 December and CI on 18 December 2013. Why are staff representatives being held at arm’s length?

2. Correspondence between posts and the organizational and programme structure

What is the programme basis for the restructuring? Taking into account the prioritization exercise, how will individuals working on more than one expected result be dealt with?

What is the situation regarding the restructuring that has already taken place in the central services, and for which there are still considerable problems?

HRM has proposed assisting sectors in drafting post descriptions, given that proposals for re-profiling posts are to be submitted by 16 December 2013 at the latest. Does the Administration intend using generic post descriptions? If so, for what types of post in particular?

Could you clarify which posts will be submitted to the redeployment committee? Will it only be posts abolished as a result of programme abolition or reduction (thus, some 285 vacant and occupied posts, as indicated in document 192 EX/16) or will it also concern posts whose functions are redefined (*downgraded, upgraded, re-profiled, transferred*, paragraph 13 of the memo of 27 November 2013) owing to the restructuring?

3. Staff movements carried out before the redeployment exercise

Despite your instructions “that no post should be advertised and no staff member reassigned, unless the requirements of the service make it an absolute necessity” and that “the only posts to be advertised externally, at the same time as internally, are the posts of Directors and specialized posts for which the competencies do not exist in-house (for example, the post of Ethics Officer)” (your memo DG/13/6340 of 4 October 2013), STU has noted in some sectors a number of staff movements in recent months (including promotions), before the redeployment exercise, as well as unjustified recruitment, both external and internal, for which explanations were requested from HRM. A list of such cases will be addressed to you separately.

If the requirements of the services were an “absolute necessity”, simple secondments, instead of transfers or internal recruitment, could have taken place pending the overall redeployment exercise.

As there are a significant number of movements in some structures and not in others, how can these various movements and appointments be justified, when they in fact reduce the redeployment opportunities for staff members whose posts will be abolished?

4. Non-observance of the provisions of Administrative Circular AC/HR/33

HRM does not respect the application of the provisions of Administrative Circular AC/HR/33. By way of example, HRM has asked staff members wishing to go part-time to discuss their request with their supervisor first, and for a part-time agreement to be signed by the staff member and the supervisor by 11 December 2013. Why is HRM requiring implementation of the “standard” procedure as set out in HR Item 13.13 of the Human Resources Manual when the Administrative Circular, issued in the specific context of the need to cut costs, clearly stipulates that staff members should submit the request to HRM by 11 December 2013, that it is up to DIR/HRM to approve the requests (and not the supervisor), and that once the request has been approved (and not before), the staff member and the supervisor sign a part-time agreement?

STU calls for such practices to stop immediately. It also calls for a detailed situation report regarding all requests to be transmitted to it as soon as the exercise has ended on 11 December 2013.

5. Implementation schedule for the memo of 27 November 2013

The timetable submitted in the 27 November 2013 memo contains several inconsistencies, in particular as regards decisions to be taken about staff proposals to be submitted on 16 December 2013. For instance, while the ADGs must communicate the total cost of the structure to be established, ensuring that the total does not exceed the staff budget contained in document 37 C/5 Addendum 2, only savings made through special leave without pay, part-time work and secondment to other agencies, etc. (Administrative Circular AC/HR/33) will be taken into account. However, the deadline for this exercise is 11 December 2013 with replies to requests to be provided in January 2014. As a result, according to the present timetable, only savings made from separation packages will be taken into account.

Why, despite STU's reiterated requests to take into account all the savings made in the revision of the number of posts that might be abolished, was Administrative Circular AC/HR/33 not published until 27 November 2013, not allowing savings made by its application to be taken into account, when Administrative Circular AC/HR/30 concerning the voluntary separation programme (2013) was published on 9 September 2013 thereby enabling savings made by its application to be taken into account?

Furthermore, as we have emphasized on numerous occasions, and in particular in our letter of 27 June 2013 (ref. STU/6eBE/13/017), the post abolition notifications for staff members provided for in paragraph 12 of Administrative Circular AC/HR/28 must be sent at the same time to all of the Organization's staff, regardless of service. This is because any redeployment that does not take place as part of a single, overall exercise might lead to unequal treatment. Nonetheless, the separate restructuring of the EO/AO units is still under way and will not be completed before February or even March 2014. The redeployment exercise will already have started, so what will happen to staff members then affected by post abolition or by posts whose functions will be redefined (downgraded, upgraded, re-profiled, transferred, paragraph 13 of the memo of 27 November 2013)? Why have you arrived at this inadmissible situation, when STU has constantly stressed the importance of a single, overall redeployment exercise on the grounds of equal opportunities for staff redeployment?

In the light of the foregoing, STU calls for a realistic revision of the timetable (including an adjustment of the period allocated to staff associations to consider the list of abolished posts, given the impossibility of submitting the list in the week of 30 December 2013, with a significant proportion of the staff on annual leave and Headquarters closed from 23 to 27 December,) so as to enable (i) the taking into account of all savings made (separation packages, special leave without pay, part-time work, job-sharing and inter-agency transfers) and (ii) the establishment of a single, overall redeployment exercise, not one with several phases.

STU also requests a copy of the detailed staffing table drawn up as at 31 October 2013 and submitted by HRM (paragraph 4 of the 27 November 2013 memo), the proposals to be communicated on 16 December 2013 (paragraph 13 of the 27 November 2013 memo) and the draft letter to be sent to staff by HRM, so that it has at its disposal all the necessary information for its effective participation in the current exercise. A simple list of posts, in the absence of those other documents (current organizational chart, proposed organizational chart, functional statement and other supporting documents in accordance with paragraph 13 of the 27 November 2013 memo) could not allow for such participation.

Despite STU's desire to cooperate, and in the absence of a clear commitment to cooperate on the part of the Administration, STU will be forced to make radical changes to its approach.

Pending a meeting with you as soon as possible with my advisers, please accept, Madam Director-General, the assurance of my highest consideration.

Elia Matias
President of STU