



## **OVERALL INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS**

### **ON THE LIST OF OCCUPIED POSTS PROPOSED FOR ABOLITION**

#### **AT HEADQUARTERS**

(February 2014)

STU has been actively involved in the restructuring exercise and has cooperated closely with the Administration from the beginning of it. In this context, STU welcomes the opportunity given to it to formulate its comments and observations on the list of posts proposed for abolition that was presented to it on Tuesday, 11 February, 2014, at 18hrs, and which was accompanied by a number of supporting documents.

STU has chosen to comment the proposed abolitions in each Sector/Service, for which it will provide general comments related to that Sector/Service and then a comment on each of the proposed posts in the list for that Sector/Service.

Before proceeding to each specific Sector/service, however, STU hereby makes the following observations related to the proposed post abolitions in general, the process as a whole and the redeployment exercise in its integrity:

1. STU regrets that, despite numerous oral and verbal communications and agreements, the quantity, quality and type of information that was presented to it, in support of the list of proposed post abolitions was not as complete as it should have been, and when this information did in some cases end up being provided, it was only after several requests and reformulation of requests that had to be made time and again, in order to receive complete and coherent/uniform organigrammes, lists of posts that are vacant within them, etc. In some cases some information was not provided, despite our requests. Furthermore, STU discovered that some of the current organigrammes presented to it were out of date and did not reflect the current situation of these sectors/services. In addition, many Sectors/Services were completely omitted from the information provided to STU, under pretext that no posts were proposed for abolition in these Sectors/Services (ED, CI, BSP, LA, MSS (except BKI) and GBS). While this may be indeed the case, it would have been much more preferable, in a context of full transparency, to have the complete picture and organigrammes/situation for the entire UNESCO. In this same mode, it was only at the last minute that it was announced to STU that it had been decided to have two separate lists, one for HQ and one for the Field, which is in complete contradiction for equal treatment for HQ and Field within ONE UNESCO. Perhaps even more important, in practical terms, is the fact that post abolition and redeployments are intrinsically tied between HQ and the Field, so there seems to be little logic in separating the lists. It is evident that all the above complications rendered STU's task much more difficult.

2. STU further regrets that it was only given a 12 working day delay to provide its comments on the list. While recognizing that this is an improvement over the original 10 working days delay, this period is still way too short for such an important exercise, not only because of the large number of posts affected and the importance of providing useful comments for each of them, but also considering that not all information was provided at the beginning of the 12-day period, thus reducing the time available for analysis and that the period coincided with the French (Paris area) school holiday period and some STU Councillors and many UNESCO staff were unavailable. STU understands the time pressures the Director-General may be under, but this exercise will shape the professional and personal lives of many UNESCO colleagues and cannot be taken lightly or rushed purely because of administrative or political pressure at the expense of the human factor.
3. STU is very much surprised that in the list given, the justifications provided by HRM for explaining each of the proposed posts to be abolished is extremely short and consists of only 5-10 words which are of an extreme generality and very often used on a mechanical/systematic way repeated exactly for many of the posts. It has been extremely difficult for STU to comment on each of these posts and their justifications provided by HRM when there is absolutely no substance or detailed information provided. As paragraph 10 of the ADG/BSP and DIR/HRM memo of 27 November 2013 addressed to all SMT members and Directors/Heads of Field Offices states, 'for each post proposed for abolition, you must indicate the rationale for abolition, in generic terms (such as budget reduction, reduction in administrative support, etc.), and in the event of an occupied post, in specific terms, justifying the proposal'. Furthermore, STU is further surprised since it has either direct or indirect information that in ALL Sectors/Services, the justifications provided to affected staff members when they were met by their hierarchical supervisors to inform them of the proposed abolition of their posts were substantially more detailed and concrete and useful (even when the staff member or STU was not in agreement with the nature of the justification or reasoning provided). Why then was the information provided to STU in the HRM list so brief and general and obviously different from the one presented by sectors to HRM?
4. STU is concerned by a large number of G-level posts proposed for abolition in most sectors/services and which do not seem to find a place in the new structure. Besides the obvious threat to the staff concerned, STU is worried that the traditional importance of G-level staff is being forgotten. Much of this work is of a support and bureaucratic nature and is needed in order to keep the institutional memory that our G staff possess. Furthermore, it is well known that within G staff different staff members have very different essential functions. Many G staff do not carry out secretarial work but instead have responsibility for public information, new technologies, programme support, etc. In addition, there is no proof that the suppression of G staff would bring significant economies to the Organization during this biennium, when compared for example with the cost of high-level P and above staff. Of particular concern is the case of lower level G staff (G4, G3 and G2) which can only be redeployed into same or lower level grades and there are almost no posts at this level available for their possible redeployment. The non-replacement of incumbents upon retirement would be a more appropriate and human action. Moreover, there seems to be a tendency for outsourcing these G core functions to other types of short-term contracts which the STU opposes firmly.
5. Likewise, in at least two sectors (SC and CLT), some EO and AO posts are included in the list even though the EO/AO reform has not yet been finalized and no proposal made to the Director-General for her approval/decision. STU has always maintained that redeployment of ALL EO/AO colleagues should take place in a single

redeployment exercise with all other colleagues and not separately or partially as the present list includes.

6. STU further notices that many of the proposed new organigrammes for various sectors/services do not respect the guidelines and instructions provided in the memo of 27 November 2013 from ADG/BSP and DIR/HRM, particularly in terms of the number of divisions, sections, units, etc. that should exist in each of the structures. Likewise, within each of the proposed divisions, sections, units, etc. often the number and/or level of the staff proposed does also not respect the guidelines of the above-mentioned memo.
7. STU would like to highlight that, despite a number of clear instructions by the Director-General, the DDG, HRM and BSP to senior managers, the restructuring exercise has been carried out in a very uneven way depending on each Sector/Service, thus resulting, once again, in 5 (and more) different UNESCO's and, much more importantly, very disparate and unequal treatment of its staff, depending on where they are located, with some sectors such as ERI adhering to the guidelines related to the process for abolition of posts, others such as CLT completely disregarding them and others somewhere in between. While each « manager » (or person) indeed has a different mind, this differential treatment can in no way be acceptable to STU. ALL rules apply to ALL staff at UNESCO equally.
8. STU understands (and this is also the publicly-stated policy of the Administration) that the programmatic restructuring (and the staffing that derives from it) to adjust to the USD\$ 507 million scenario is guided by the list of expected result priorities that the Executive Board adopted in July 2013. However, in examining the proposed programmatic reorientations (or lack thereof) and the staffing proposals to match them (including proposed abolitions of posts), STU sees that there can often be little relevance or direct link between the priorities established by the Member States, which are of a general programmatic nature and their translation into actual activities/initiatives at the concrete operational or normative levels. However, this is where staffing requirements are measured. Further aggravating this, is the fact that in some Sectors/Services, proposed abolition of posts are based on purely "administrative" rather than programmatic criteria, even by admission of their managers (for example, CLT Sector) and therefore the link to established priorities (even general ones) can hardly be made. In some cases, merely subjective "factors" (personal favouritisms, performance, revenge, political pressures) have led to arbitrary decisions more than the established guidelines.
9. A clear trend is also emerging, under pretext of no funding available for regular posts, of using PA contracts or short-term/temporary assistance to cover regular functions normally done by staff members, in contradiction of clearly-established UNESCO rules.
10. STU is also alarmed by the significant number of internal staff movements within various sectors/services that occurred in the weeks/months preceding this redeployment exercise, thus in prevision and full knowledge of its imminent implementation, which had as objective and resulted in the placement of favoured staff members in 'safe' posts while non-favoured staff members were left or placed in riskier situations. Another obvious effect of this was the reduction of posts that would be left open for redeployment of colleagues affected by the current exercise.
11. STU notes that there is an incoherent approach to the abolishment or maintenance of FITOCA posts. In some services, FITOCA posts have been abolished although they have no influence on the staff budget. On the other hand, e.g. in BFM, one FITOCA post has been maintained because of the very reason that it is FITOCA. At the same

time in other sectors, posts with same functions as the FITOCA posts are proposed for abolition.

12. STU strongly welcomes the Director-General's pledge to take into account the comments made by STU before making her final decisions on abolition of posts. This said, STU would like to clearly state what it understands by its comments « being taken into account », and strongly urges the Director-General to really ensure that some or many of the decisions she takes are indeed the result of STU comments which make her change her mind and decision on what is originally proposed in the list. If despite all its hard work and constructive comments provided, despite the enormous time pressure, STU feels that no changes were made to the lists provided initially by HRM and that its comments made no difference in the final decisions taken, then a large sense of unease and the feeling that consultations with STU are « just for show » will be inevitable.
13. In the same line of thought, and while fully understanding and respectful of the fact that according to various documents, administrative and human resources manuals and guidelines of UNESCO, it is the Director-General's prerogative to take all decisions that she believes to be in the best interest of the Organization, the exceptional circumstances of this exercise and the repercussions it will have among many of its (sometimes lifelong serving) staff and their families, combined with the Director-General's conviction of a "new humanism" mean that this absolute power that the Director-General enjoys institutionally and constitutionally should be used, now more than ever, with the utmost discretion and retention, in order to give every possibility that the staff (« Unesco's greatest asset ») and its welfare and livelihood really does become in a humanist way the main consideration « in the best interests of the Organization ». In other words, it will become very hard for STU to accept that quick, systematic and non staff-human based justifications for abolitions are presented by the Director-General or her delegated senior managers as being « in the best interests of the Organization ». This even more so, considering that the STU (and others) have proposed (and the Director-General often accepted) a number of measures destined precisely to provide savings to the organization and thus reduce the number of posts that must be cut in order to meet the new budgetary restrictions. STU has shown, repeatedly that, with a degree of flexibility and humanistic motivation, it would be possible to reengineer the staffing structure and guarantee no post abolitions, after the savings originating from measures such as agreed separations, special leaves without pay, part-time work, job sharing, non-renewals beyond mandatory retirement age, reductions/elimination of high level (D and above) vacant costly posts, just to name a few.