



*"Since 1952, we mean Staff"*

**STATEMENT BY MAURO PACE,  
PRESIDENT OF THE FEDERATION OF INTERNATIONAL CIVIL SERVANTS ASSOCIATIONS (FICSA) ON  
AGENDA ITEM 137: UNITED NATIONS COMMON SYSTEM  
New York, 26 November 2012**

Thank you Mr. Chairman.

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the membership of the Federation of International Civil Servants' Associations, FICSA, in representation of thousands of women and men - from eighteen organizations of the UN common system - who chose to dedicate their work and energies, sometimes their life, to the pursuit of the UN Charter. How many voices do I represent here today?

According to the official statistics provided by the secretariat of the Chief Executives Board (CEB), about twenty-five thousand. According to our estimates, this figure could be reasonably increased at least by forty to fifty per cent, should the cohort of those colleagues inappropriately classified as non-staff be included.

The use of non-staff is an issue on which I will revert later during my intervention.

Mr. Chairman,

As this is our first and only opportunity to address a formal meeting of the Fifth Committee at this session we wish to congratulate you and the other members of the Bureau on your election. We wish also to thank Ms. Sharon Van Buerle and the colleagues from the Secretariat for their patient coordination of our intervention today despite the hardship due to the hurricane and other storms. We wish to thank Mr Kingston Rhodes, Chairman of the International Civil Service Commission for the introduction of the ICSC annual report.

Distinguished Members of the 5<sup>th</sup> Committee,

FICSA is addressing you on the item UN Common System, providing its views on the recommendations contained in the Report of the International Civil Service Commission for 2012 (A/67/30).

Usually in our statement we provide a policy statement on the issues submitted for decision; this year our task is facilitated by the fact that the document under consideration today substantially reflects the views and opinions expressed in both the Bangkok and the New York sessions.

We have been supporting the compliance with rules and methodologies, be they applied to education grant, dependency allowances or the management of the margin.

FICSA supports the view of the Commission, as reflected in paragraph 26 (a) and (b) of its annual report, that there is no need to intervene on the existing mechanisms for adjustment of United Nations salaries, which already contain a sufficient number of safeguards, checks and balances to ensure that the application of a desirable margin is adhered to.

#### **Review of the level of the education grant**

The review of the level of education grant clearly showed a difference in perception between those who consider the system to be too generous and those, including FICSA, who know what a fundamental role the education grant plays in fostering the international mobility of UN staff and families.

Therefore, FICSA expresses its disappointment at the final ICSC decision to move away from the established adjustment procedures, as it reduced by fifty per cent the due adjustment based on the applicable formula.

Equally, FICSA looks with concern at the expected conclusion of the ongoing methodological review under the current climate of diffused economic crisis.

#### **Report of the Working Group on the Review of Pensionable Remuneration**

The review of the pensionable remuneration achieved a major methodological result, as it revealed how the comparability of the UN pension scheme - servicing about hundred and twenty thousand participants dispersed in 587 duty stations in 175 countries - and that of the United States Federal Employees Retirement System - covering more than two million employees belonging to a single civil service - is limited by fundamental structural differences. Nevertheless, the review resulted in a useful stock-taking exercise, which established the overall comparability in the income-replacement ratios of the US and UN schemes.

The mechanism for future adjustments to grossing-up factors and staff assessment rates - two fundamental components for calculation of fair pensions - remains too susceptible to subjectivity, as the Commission's decision calls for a "pragmatic" approach.

In FICSA's view the term "pragmatism" has been too often abused and stretched to justify the departure from principles and methodologies; for this reason, we are supportive of the continued application of a sound objective procedure for future adjustments in staff assessment rates and are available for further discussions on potential improvements.

#### **Report of the working group on standards of conduct for the international civil service**

FICSA supports the recommendations for revision of the standards of conduct, most notably with reference to the sections on harassment, abuse of authority, conflict of interest and use of the organizations' resources exclusively for authorized purposes. However, the staff representatives did not succeed in their plea for the inclusion of accountability principles for safety and security of staff, which should be unequivocally incumbent on the employer.

We are alarmed by the absence of a compelling roadmap for implementation of the revised standards by organizations, possibly resulting in a low compliance rate. It is our hope that your resolution will eventually address our concern.

### **Mandatory age of separation**

FICSA supported the recommendation of the United Nations Joint Pension Board to raise the mandatory age of separation to 65 for new staff effective no later than 1 January 2014. It also supported opening the same possibility to staff recruited before the cut-off date, on a voluntary basis and without prejudice to the conditions applicable at the time of recruitment.

We look forward to working with all interested parties at the strategic review of the implications of applying the increased mandatory age of separation to current staff, as recommended by the Commission.

### **Contractual arrangements: review of implementation of the three types of contracts and the phasing out of appointments of limited duration**

The decisions of the Commission on the contractual framework came as a reason for disappointment to FICSA, as one of the operational paragraphs allow the organizations the possibility of implementing “*any combination*” of the three defined contract types.

FICSA reckons that this approach defeats the original purpose of the framework, *de facto* attaining the opposite result.

A clear indication of the fragmentation of contracts in the UN common system can be found in a few, significant figures (sourced from CEB documentation): in a system that employs about 190 thousand staff members, some 86 thousand, that is 45 per cent of the total workforce, belong to the so-called non-staff.

*“ (...) The denomination given by organizations to the different types of non-staff contracts are: Special Service Agreements, Individual Contractor Agreement, Service Contract, Government Secondees, Supernumerary Contracts, Individual Contractor Contract, External Collaboration Contract, United Nations Volunteer, Individual Consultant, Individual Specialist, Contractual Service Agreement, Consultant, Casual Labor, Visiting Expert, PSA Subscriber, National Project Personnel, National Correspondent, South/South Subscriber, TCDC/TCCT Expert, Editors, Proofreaders, Teachers, Contractual Service Agreement, Agency Field, Ministry Staff, National Staff, Gratis Personnel<sup>1</sup>”.*

Non-staff are cheaper than regularly employed staff; consequently their popularity has increased dramatically in almost all the organizations, resulting sometimes in shares of non-staff contracts as high as 70 per cent of the total employed individuals.

However, if the burden on the budget is alleviated by the use of non-staff, the devastating effects on the organizational climate are hardly measurable. Young recruits - i.e. those who normally are offered these contracts - very soon realize that they are discriminated, instead of being offered a roadmap for integration into a less precarious contractual condition.

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<sup>1</sup> CEB/2011/HLCM/HR/21 of 12 August 2012.

Recently, at the 24<sup>th</sup> High Level Committee on Management in Washington, FICSA raised the same question, recalling how the growing need for the action and the services of the United Nations require a *cadre* of stable, truly international civil servants.

As the global need for peace, development, food security, health and assistance to the weakest populations of the world is on the rise, demand on the UN staff has also become more pressing; however, the recurrent request to the organizations is: "*do more with less*".

The continuous research of the lowest possible price tag is driving the system beyond a very dangerous break-even point, where the essence of the international civil service will be lost.

Today more than ever, the world needs efficient and independent United Nations, nothing more or less than the Secretariat described in Articles 100 and 101 of the UN Charter.

The issue is of vital importance.

The need for a competent, independent international civil service was already spelled out by Sir Eric Drummond, first Secretary-General of the League of Nations, who in 1919 paved the way to Articles 100 and 101.

Since then almost all executive heads, from Dag Hammarskjold to René Maheu, up to the current Secretary-General, reiterated, in front of different audiences and at different times, that independence, impartiality, competence and accountability are key to the very existence of the international civil service, which needs the competence and institutional memory of career staff, not an uncontrolled proliferation of atypical contracts.

We are aware of the Member States concerns for appropriate representation of geographical diversity and equitable representation and are ready to discuss and provide suggestions on the basis of an holistic approach encompassing all aspects of the multi-faceted contractual realities.

Therefore, FICSA believes that implementation of the framework has to be monitored against the backdrop of the increase in use of non-staff contracts as well.

#### **Base/floor salary scale and evolution of the UN/US remuneration margin**

Both adjustments - i.e. (i) in the base/floor salary scale of 0.12 percent on no gain/no loss and (ii) in the post adjustment multiplier of 68.0 due in New York on 1 August 2012 - are supported by FICSA.

Since last year FICSA witnessed with serious concern the increasing pressure exercised on the Commission by different parties, by some organizations and some Member States alike. Facts and perceptions have been circulated and used to support different agendas and interests. Official information has been questioned, revised, audited and contested. We note with regret and apprehension that, in addressing this item, the Commission may have yielded to some of this pressure at the expense of the soundness of the very methodologies it has a mandate to uphold.

The UN budget has been alleged of being "disconnected from global financial realities", while affirming that that decision making is hampered by political pressure from every direction.

FICSA has been consistent in maintaining that the adjustment methodology is sound and well equipped with check and balances, to ensure full and rapid connection to external financial realities. Moreover, recent analysis from the ACABQ indicates that the financial crisis that appeared to prevail in July has been positively reassessed in September 2012.

All the relevant conditions are therefore united to turn this disconcerting page on the interactions and governance of the common system. FICSA hopes that this opportunity will be seized in your resolution on this subject.

In this context, FICSA notes the inclusion in the Programme of work of the Commission of the item "Review of the common system compensation package" and wishes to put on record its strong interest in understanding the aim, the terms of reference and the framework of such a far-reaching review.

#### **Survey of best prevailing conditions of employment in Rome**

FICSA wishes to put on record its dissatisfaction with a result, a negative 9.2 percent, which unduly penalizes the staff based in Italy, due to amendments in the new salary survey methodology - applied for the first time in Rome after promulgation - not in line with the spirit of the Flemming principle.

Local staff in other duty stations, such as Bangkok and Santiago - are confronted with a downturn in results of intolerable levels, resulting in years of freeze and substantial reductions in purchasing power.

#### **Conditions of service in the field and mobility**

A substantial part of our action addressed safeguard of the conditions of employment of our colleagues serving in remote, dangerous and hardship locations, already hit by the phasing out of the Special Operation Approach and subsequent cuts in the rest and recuperation framework.

FICSA has been stating that such reform could reduce the ability of the field-oriented organizations in some of the most difficult operational areas. Unfortunately, the scarcity of international staff in certain locations would appear to confirm that our concerns were not unfounded.

The overall framework for mobility remains very fragmented, some of the systemic changes from the old system have not yet found an acceptable replacement under the new approach.. The framework for evacuation allowances, the definition of the accommodation portion of rest and recuperation travel, the criteria for adjustments in danger pay are still pending after postponement of relevant considerations.

We hope that your forthcoming resolution shall take this overdue situation into consideration, bearing in mind the role played by such allowances in the intra and extra-organizational mobility of the UN common system staff.

### **Concluding remarks**

Finally, allow me to have word on sub-item, the JIU report on Staff Management Relations, that was introduced under item 135, Human Resources Management, and which has implications on the entire system. We listened with interest to the interventions by the distinguished delegates, including the first volume of the JIU report staff/management relations.

FICSA would like to mention to the delegation that expressed their concern that the JIU recommendations on SMR would dilute the decision-making process that the right to negotiate is indeed a tool for social dialogue aimed at achieving a shared understanding of events. It's actually designed to ensure buying-in and motivation of staff.

In concluding, FICSA wishes to reiterate its interest to meet the distinguished delegates and expand on any of the issue which have been raised in this statement, as well as on any other issue they may wish to clarify with the staff representative.

We wish you a successful completion of this session.

Thank you Mr Chairman.



### **Copenhagen Declaration**

*Whereas, under Article 100 of the Charter of the United Nations, it is stated that "In the performance of their duties the Secretary-General and the staff shall not seek or receive instructions from any government or from any other authority external to the Organization. They shall refrain from any action which might reflect on their position as international officials responsible only to the Organization",*

*Whereas, under Article 100 of the Charter of the United Nations, it is also stated that "Each Member of the United Nations undertakes to respect the exclusively international character of the responsibilities of the Secretary-General and the staff and not to seek to influence them in the discharge of their responsibilities",*

*Whereas, under Article 101 of the Charter of the United Nations, it is affirmed that "The paramount consideration in the employment of the staff and in the determination of the conditions of service shall be the necessity of securing the highest standards of efficiency, competence, and integrity", and*

*In pursuance thereof,*

**We, the Members of FICSA,**

On the occasion of the meeting of the 65<sup>th</sup> Council of FICSA (Copenhagen, 13-17 February 2012) do solemnly declare the following, hereafter to be known as the

### **Copenhagen Declaration**

*We reaffirm our commitment to the aims and objectives of the Federation of International Civil Servants' Associations as stated in the Federation's Statutes to:*

- (a) Ensure the closest cooperation at all levels, with the aim of achieving the purposes set forth in the Charter of the United Nations;
- (b) Promote the development of the international civil service and the defence of its independence, in accordance with the relevant constitutional provisions and the staff regulations of the respective organizations;
- (c) Defend the interests of international civil servants, with due regard for the international standards on human rights, proclaimed or reaffirmed by the organizations in the United Nations system, including international labour standards.

*We, furthermore, reaffirm our commitment to the pursuit of fundamental human and labour rights for all international civil servants, including*

- i. The right to freedom of association,
- ii. The right to collective bargaining, through our staff associations and unions, regarding our working conditions;
- iii. The right to due process before independent administrative tribunals; and
- iv. The application of those rights according to internationally-agreed human rights instruments and labour standards, as embodied in ILO Conventions and Recommendations relating to conditions of employment.

*We, moreover, declare our commitment to exert renewed efforts, at all levels, to safeguard the highest standards of impartiality, integrity and devotion embodied in the international civil service in the pursuit of international cooperation endeavours.*

***Adopted in Copenhagen on the occasion of the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Federation of International Civil Servants' Associations (FICSA), on 17 February 2012.***