

UNISERV OPENING STATEMENT

Mr. Chairman,

UNISERV would like to express its appreciation to the Committee for extending an invitation to address it on the subject of the proposed compensation package for United Nations staff.

We preface our comments by noting that the United States Government Accountability Office (GAO) found in its report GAO-13-526 in 2014 that the UN and the U.S. government offer generally similar benefits and allowances to their employees, with some difference. Accordingly, we see no logical basis for the ICSC to recommend any deviation from the current compensation package that from our perspective is already 'fit for purpose'. This having been said we concede that United Nations staff cannot be isolated from the economic downturn that many Member States are experiencing and recognize that economies need to be made that we may not particularly find agreeable.

Mr. Chairman,

UNISERV is concerned that the proposed compensation package disproportionately impacts field staff that serve on the front line to carry out peace-keeping mandates of the organization and the delivery of humanitarian assistance at great personal risk to their health and safety. As you may be aware, UNISERV represents predominantly field-based staff committed to delivery of the mandates given to them by the General Assembly and it is hoped that the Committee will take this into consideration in its review of the proposed package. Staff that work in C and E category duty stations stand to be the most impacted and that is surely counterintuitive. Having expressed our general concerns above, we consider it may be useful to focus on those issues that are of most concern to our staff. We would like to share with the Committee four areas of particular concern, namely: accelerated home leave, mobility, single parent allowance and education grant.

- 1) Discontinuance of the accelerated home leave will increase the hardship for staff separated from their loved ones, contribute to the already high percentage of family break-ups and health issues and create a situation where the staff member may be rendered unable to perform his/her official functions. It is a critical fact to note that many Missions do not get Rest and Recuperation and for various reasons a staff member's family are not in location. The mental and physical health of staff serving in such circumstances should be of principal concern to the organization.
- 2) The recognition of mobility through the current system should not be replaced by one that does not reflect accurately or compensate the number of relocations undertaken by a staff member in the performance of his/her duty.
- 3) The proposal for single parent staff is to be regretted because it verges on discrimination if not actually constituting discrimination. There are many factors that determine single parent status that make this group of staff more vulnerable than others and the rationale for targeting this particular group of staff is of great concern. It is also a concern that staff with dependent status will experience downward adjustments in the allowances they receive for the additional costs of supporting a family.
- 4) The proposal for education grant has been based on the principle of equality which has guided the application of the grant since its inception. Staff serving in the field is faced with difficult choices when it comes to finding a suitable school in which to enroll their children, and the current system allows them the latitude to ensure a suitable education as compared to staff in headquarters duty stations. We believe that the proposals presented in the report of ICSC have ramifications that require further consideration and analysis and hope that the Committee will find that it may be useful to refer the matter back to ICSC for further review.

Mr. Chairman,

UNISERV hopes that the Committee will consider the issues that we have flagged as of great importance to all staff but particularly those in the front line supporting the field and humanitarian mandates of the General Assembly. We thank you.