

## **Agenda item 143: Human Resources Management**

### **Statement to the Fifth Committee by Ms. Mona Fattah, Chairperson of the ESCWA Staff Council, on behalf of the Staff Management Committee staff representatives.**

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Delegates,

Good morning. I am honored to report to you, on behalf of my colleagues from all around the world, on the priority issues related to our conditions of service at the UN.

With only five minutes, I will only highlight our major positions, concerns, and calls for support. But I can assure you that there is much more, and I will be happy to follow up with delegations on any of the important issues under your agenda.

Ladies and gentlemen, the UN Staff members need your support to safeguard the conditions of service that protect our human and labor rights and give us the motivation and perseverance to serve the Organization that we cherish.

Allow me, first, to transmit to Member State delegations, on behalf of all United Nations staff, our deepest sympathy, and solidarity for all those facing multifaceted threats in countries affected by war, natural disasters, economic hardship, and everywhere where COVID-19 imposed its heavy repercussions.

For more than two years, the UN secretariat staff members at all levels, including our colleagues in the field, have exerted exceptional efforts to keep the UN operations and services running and meeting the expectations of member states. This was demonstrated by the up-to-date deliverables and lengthy hours of remote work in such difficult circumstances.

In the era of war-pandemic duality, we maintain our commitment to fulfilling our duties efficiently and effectively. However, we must admit that this stressful and insecure period implied a substantial load on our physical and mental health.

We do recognize the effort put by the UN management to address staff safety, mental health issues, and physical back-to-office challenges. Yet, we call upon your support to enhance the Organization's capacities on these fronts and respond to our continuous calls for equal treatment across all categories and levels and reasonably flexible and accommodative arrangements.

On the Human Resources Strategies, we reiterate that we have serious concerns regarding our future of work and the unclear path which the organization is drawing for its workforce.

We know that the set outcomes for these strategies (agility, accountability, diversity) sound promising but we still see deviations in recruitment, inadequate career prospects for internal staff, misuse of the delegation of authority, and shortfalls in terms of fair representation of different groups.

We cannot deny that, in some ways, staff are being consulted but in a nominal way. Therefore, we count on your support to empower the consultation mechanisms that lead to an embraced change that preserves the welfare of the staff as well as the interests of member states.

For us, the removal of career advancement barriers for General Service staff and other related categories is one key step toward real rightful reform. On this, we count on your support to instruct the Secretariat to proceed with the pilot project previously proposed by the ACABQ, through which general service and related categories staff get the chance to apply to professional posts outside those allocated for the YPP program.

We regret to see the Organization relying more and more on individual contractors instead of directing the efforts toward the improvement of internal expertise and skills. The talk of new contractual modalities is of great concern to all staff members, and we count on your support to improve the existing conditions of service and make sure that existing contract modalities are used to their maximum potential.

We need to see the Organization implementing continuous contracts for those eligible staff in all categories and applying fair use of rosters, which will minimize the recruitment period and motivate staff to compete and enhance their skills and knowledge.

On disciplinary matters, we have seen management taking some adequate decisions following due processes. But we can assure you that abuse of authority and harassment of different nature are still occurring in various duty stations where staff sometimes opt to keep quiet to avoid retaliation and lengthy stressful processes. We need your support to enhance the existing investigation and disciplinary process and make it more alert and agile. Staff members need to trust the system to be encouraged to report misconduct. We need your support to enhance accountability and oversight in the Organization, and we look forward to seeing management detecting and addressing the outcome of staff engagement and satisfaction surveys.

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Delegates,

We, the UN Staff members, renew our oath to serve the Organization and its member states, which we also represent, with sincere dedication and commitment.

And I close with Bob Nelson's words "*Take time to appreciate employees and they will reciprocate in a thousand ways*".