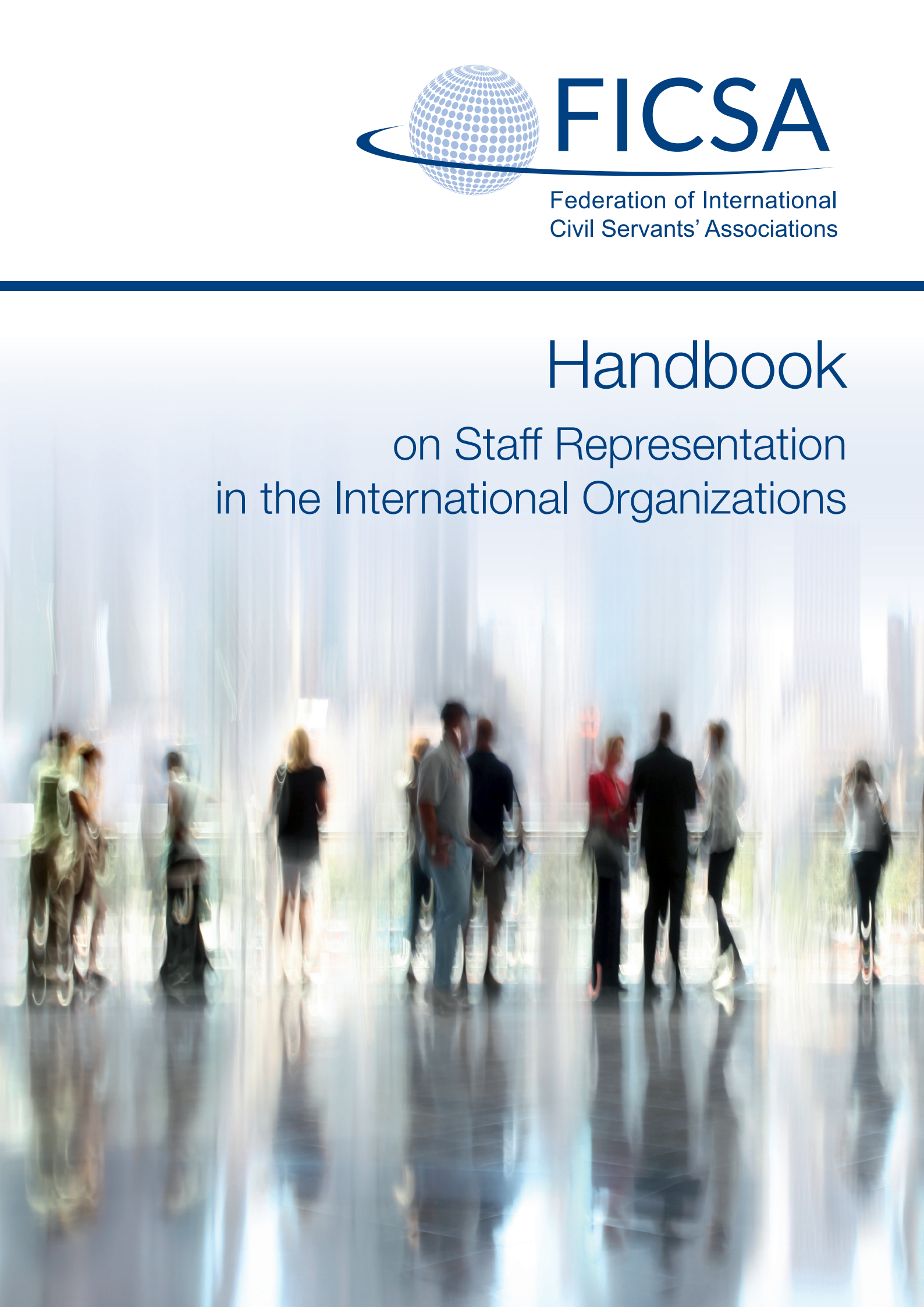
FICSA

Federation of International
Civil Servants' Associations

Handbook

on Staff Representation in the International Organizations



Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC)

International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)

International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)

International Training Center of the ILO (ILO TC)

International Maritime Organization (IMO)

Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)

International Telecommunication Union (ITU)

Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)

Pan American Health Organization - WHO Regional Office for the Americas (PAHO-WHO),

Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (SCBD)

Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS)

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

United Nations Global Service Centre (UNGSC)

United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA)

United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)

Universal Postal Union (UPU)

World Health Organization (WHO)

World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)

World Meteorological Organization (WMO)

BIOVERSITY International

Bureau International des Poids et Mesures (BIPM)

European Organization for Nuclear Physics (CERN)

Centre international d'enregistrement des publications en série (CIEPS)

Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO)

European Central Bank (ECB)

European Southern Observatory (ESO)

The Global Fund

International Cocoa Organization (ICCO)

International Coffee Organization (ICO)

International Development Law Organization (IDLO)

International Organization for Migration (IOM)

International Olive Council (IOC)

International Organization International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER)

Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, (OPCW)

World Customs Organization (WCO)

World Trade Organization (WTO)

United Nations Industrial Development Ogranization

INTRODUCTION

This handbook, originally posted on the FICSA website in 2006 has been updated to reflect the changing environment of the United Nations, its specialized agencies and many of the international organizations which are members of FICSA, but not necessarily part of the UN common system. The previous version focused on the creation of a staff association or union, this revised version also includes information and advice to staff associations and unions of international organizations that are already established and officially recognized by their executive heads.

While the membership of the staff association or union may vary, some as small as 12, the principles of the right of association, effective staff/management relations, rights and obligations of the elected staff representatives are constant. The importance of a well-informed staff representative body in combatting arbitrary and unjust actions and defending the rights of staff and promoting their interests cannot be overemphasized. We hope this Handbook reinforces the belief that staff and their elected staff representatives have the power to affect change and exert control over their work environment and their conditions of employment.

FICSA
Federation of International Civil Servants' Associations

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. DEFINITIONS

I. Staff association or union?

What is a staff association? 5

What is a staff union? 5

What is the difference between a staff association and a staff union? 5

2. GETTING STARTED

II. Identify the object or aims of the staff association or union

What is the object of the staff association or union? 6

III. Identify the actions of the staff association or union

What actions will the staff association or union take in defence of staff? 6

IV. Constitute the staff association or union

An explanation about the names used. 7

What are the Statutes? 7

What should be included in the Statutes? 7

V. The Recognition Agreement

What is a recognition agreement? 9

How does the Staff Committee negotiate a recognition agreement? 9

VI. Creating a Staff Committee

How will the creators of the staff association or union decide on the size and composition of the Staff Committee? 10

How is the Staff Committee elected? 10

How long is a term of office? 11

How many terms of office can members of the Staff Committee stay in office? 11

VII. Dues

How much should be charged for dues? 11

How do members pay their dues? 11

VIII. Membership

Should staff on any type of contract be permitted to join the association or union? 11

Should the association or union have both full and associate members? 12

How does the association or union attract members? 12

IX. Function and role of the Staff Committee

An explanation about the names 13

What is the composition of the Staff Committee? 13

How often should the Staff Committee meet? 13

How many members of the Staff Committee constitute a quorum? 13
What are the Terms of Reference of the Staff Committee? 14

3. DEFENDING STAFF

X. Activities of the Staff Committee

How many meetings should be held with the general membership during the year? 15
How often should the Staff Committee meet with the Executive Head or other officials? 15
How does the Staff Committee determine its work programme for the year? 15
How does the Staff Committee set priorities? 15
How does the Staff Committee participate in joint staff-management bodies? 16
Is there a difference between elected “staff representatives” and elected “representatives of staff”? 16
How does the Staff Committee negotiate release time for its officers? 16
How does the Staff Committee communicate with the membership? 17
How does the Staff Committee seek changes to the Staff Regulations and Rules? 17
How does the Staff Committee provide legal advice to staff seeking to challenge an administrative decision? 17
How does the Staff Committee work with the Ombudsman? 19
What are the working languages of the Staff Committee? 19
How does the Staff Committee convey its views to Management? 20
What of those international organizations that do not belong to the UN Common System? . .20
How do the principles and rules governing relations with the media apply to staff associations and unions? 23
Can a Staff Committee use the media to further its aims? 23
Can FICSA help associations and unions convey their views to the Management? 23
Does the Staff Committee play a role in the social and cultural life of the staff? 23
If the Organization does not have an Ombudsman or Mediator, does the Staff Committee mediate in disputes? 24
How does a Staff Committee negotiate a new HR policy with Management? 24
What should the Staff Committee do if Management refuses to adopt a new HR policy? 25
How does the Staff Committee organize industrial action (extreme tactics)? 25
How does the Staff Committee decide when to give up on an issue? 26
What is a SWOT analysis? 27
How does the Staff Committee provide assistance to individual members? 28
Does the Staff Committee provide assistance to individual staff members who are not members of the association or union? 29
How does the Staff Committee defend the rights of staff who work away from the duty station in which the Committee has its offices? 29
When an organization has very few staff working in a Country Office or duty station, is it worthwhile to create a staff association or union? 30

How does the Staff Committee ensure that policies approved at inter-agency level are implemented in the Organization? 30

XI. Function and role of the Staff Assembly

What are the role and functions of the Staff Assembly? 31
What is the membership of the Staff Assembly? 31
How many sessions of the Staff Assembly are there each year? 31
What does the agenda for the Staff Assembly include? 32
How is business conducted at the Staff Assembly? 32
Who is permitted to vote at the Staff Assembly? 32
How is a vote carried out? 32

4. WORKING WITH OTHERS

XII. Inter-agency bodies that make decisions affecting conditions of service

What is the Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB)? 33
What is the High Level Committee on Management (HLCM)? 33
What is the Human Resources (HR) Network? 33
What is the Task Force on HIV/AIDS in the UN Workplace? 34
What is the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC)? 34
What is the Advisory Committee on Post Adjustment Questions (ACPAQ)? 34
What is the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Board (UNJSPB)? 35
What is the purpose of the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund? 35
What are the benefits provided by the Pension Fund? 35
What is the United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS)? 35
What is the Fifth Committee of the United Nations General Assembly? 36

XIII. FICSA

What is the Federation of International Civil Servants' Associations (FICSA)? 37
What are the aims of FICSA? 37
What are the FICSA Council and its Officers? 37
What can FICSA do to assist its members? 38
What are recent achievements of FICSA? 38

5. UNDERSTANDING THE TERMINOLOGY

XIV. What terms, related to salaries, allowances, pensions and human resources, are most commonly used in the UN system? 40

1 DEFINITIONS

I. Staff association or union?

What is a staff association?

A staff association is a grouping of staff or employees who, under a mutually accepted agreement such as a Constitution or Statutes, agree to safeguard the collective and individual rights and interests of staff, to promote their welfare and aid members who find themselves in difficulty.

What is a staff union?

A staff union is a grouping of staff or employees who, under a mutually accepted agreement such as a Constitution or Statutes, agree to safeguard the collective and individual rights and interests of staff, to promote their welfare and aid members who find themselves in difficulty.

What is the difference between a staff association and a staff union?

In the context of the United Nations common system, there have always been both staff associations and staff unions that have similar aims and carry out similar functions on behalf of their members. Some believe that the use of the name "staff association" reflects the professional nature of the work of international civil servants and projects a gentler and accommodating image, whereas others believe that using the name "staff union" lends an image associated with militarism and an adversarial relationship. Whether well-founded or not, the choice is yours.

In contrast to national trade unions, international staff associations or unions have a built-in limitation: their statutory loyalty to the organization. As international civil servants, the staff representatives are committed to accept and promote the objectives of their organization, to discharge their international functions and regulate their conduct with the interests of the organization alone in view.

Note: The ILOAT in Judgment 2672 defines a staff association or union as, “in essence, a voluntary association of employees and/or others in a relationship pursuant to which they perform services by way of personal exertion, who have agreed together to act collectively through that association or union to protect and promote their industrial interests. The powers of the association may extend to the protection and promotion of the industrial interests of those who are eligible to belong to the association”.

II. Identify the object or aims of the staff association or union

What is the object of the staff association or union?

After a name has been chosen, whether association or union or other, the reason(s) for the existence of the staff association or union need to be agreed on. Most staff associations and unions have similar objectives that include defending individual and collective interests, and the rights and dignity of staff. Objectives may include any or all of the following:

- Defend and work to improve the terms and conditions of employment
- Defend and work to improve all aspects of staff welfare or well-being and a respectful workplace
- Develop and improve effective staff participation in decision-making processes
- Defend and work to improve workplace safety and health and pension rights
- Safeguard security of employment
- Promote the unity of staff
- Secure equitable career development

In addition, staff associations and unions may:

- Offer access to a collective legal insurance or legal fund
- Organize and maintain cultural, social and sports facilities and activities
- Provide other services to the staff, for example, discounts on car rental, restaurants, commissary or duty free store; vacation packages, etc.

III. Identify the actions of the staff association or union

What actions will the staff association or union take in defence of staff?

Actions that staff associations or unions undertake to further their objectives may include any or all of the following:

- Engage in joint negotiations with the relevant authorities
- Support individual members in labour disputes
- Ensure that the regulations, rules and policies of the organization are equitably and consistently applied
- Participate actively and systematically at all levels in discussions on matters affecting the terms and conditions of employment
- Keep staff informed at all times regarding negotiations, agreements and all other matters of collective interest
- Cooperate with the democratically elected representatives of other staff associations and unions with a view to solving problems of common concern
- Foster contacts with national trade unions, with unions of national and international civil servants and with world confederations of trade unions to secure such

recognition, support and collaboration as may be conducive to the objectives of the staff association or union

- Appeal an administrative decisions taken in the absence of consultation (if there is a normative directive that calls for such) or in order to preserve common rights and interests of staff. One such example may be the failure of the organization to observe the rules of recruitment and appointment laid down in the staff regulations

IV. Constitute the staff association or union

"For the creation of a staff association or union representing international civil servants, there must, at the very least, be some means of identifying the agreement voluntarily to associate for the purpose of protecting and promoting the industrial interests of members, the terms of that agreement and the means by which it may be varied, both in relation to individual employees and the purposes or objects of the association. So, too, because it is a voluntary association, there must be an agreement as to the persons by or through whom the association acts, the means by which those persons are selected or elected, the matters in respect of which they have authority to act and the powers that they have in relation to those matters. In the absence of agreement as to each of those matters, the agreement to associate would, in accordance with general principles of law, be void for uncertainty. And to have an agreement covering those matters, there must be rules incorporated in a charter, a statute or some other document to which the members subscribe and by which they agree to be bound." (ILOAT Judgment 2672)

An explanation about the names

There are several names for the executive office of the association or union: Staff Committee, Executive Committee, Staff Council and Executive Secretariat are commonly used. In this publication, "Staff Committee" will be used generically.

What are the Statutes?

The Statutes of a staff association or union are the rules governing its operation. The Statutes govern or define operating parameters for organizations.

What should be included in the Statutes?

Statutes provide the methods for the election of the staff representatives, the appointment of officers and the description of their duties, the creation of committees, working groups and the conduct of meetings, etc.

There are many different types of Statutes. Those governing the operations of a staff association or union generally include provisions for most - or all - of the following topics:

- **Name:** Specify the name of the association or union
- **Definitions:** Define what is meant by "Staff Members", Management", "Members", "Secretariat"
- **Autonomy/ Independence:** Specify that the staff association or union will manage its affairs in complete independence of the management and governing bodies

of the organization, and of all national or international trade or political, unions or associations. The association or union may, however, seek and maintain affiliation with a federation of international civil servants' associations

- **Object:** Specify the purpose and reason(s) for the existence of staff association or union
- **Action:** Specify the action(s) through which the staff association or union will defend the individual and collective interests, rights and dignity of staff
- **Admission to Membership:** Identify the type of staff member that will have the right to join the staff association or union, and indicate whether any staff will be excluded from membership because, for example, the posts they occupy are seen as incompatible with membership, or with holding elected office in the association or union or because they hold a temporary, consultant or "non-staff" contract
- **Duties of Members:** Indicate the obligations ensuing from membership including the duty to abide by the Statutes; to act in the interests of the association or union; to pay an annual or monthly subscription/dues
- **Rights of Members:** Indicate the rights ensuing from membership including entitlement to elect or be elected to association or union office; assistance in labour disputes; freedom to express views on all matters concerning the association or union
- **Forfeiture of Membership Rights:** Identify the circumstances under which a member will be expelled from the association or union, and how and by whom that procedure will be carried out
- **Organs/Structure:** Indicate the organs of the association or union. These may include the Staff Assembly, the Staff Committee, Secretariat, etc.
- **Staff Assembly:** The Staff Assembly is generally the sovereign decision-making body of the association or union and is made up of all members of the association or union. Indicate how and how often the Assembly will be convened; the extent of a quorum or how many members are required to be present and voting for a decision to be taken; how decisions will be taken; the subjects on which decisions will be taken; reporting procedures, calling for an extraordinary assembly
- **Staff Committee:** Identify the positions that will be filled through election by the members and the length of the term(s) of office; limitation on number of terms of office, if applicable; periodicity of elections; how decisions will be made within the Committee; periodicity of Committee meetings;
- **Secretariat:** Identify how the Secretariat will be staffed and funded; how decisions will be made
- **Terms of Reference for Elected Officers:** Identify the Terms of Reference for each of the elected members of the Executive Committee and how to replace a member who has become indisposed
- **Other Committees:** Identify any other committees that will be used to carry out the work of the association or union; indicate how members will be selected or elected; Identify the Terms of Reference for each committee
- **Motion of No Confidence/ Removal of Officers:** Indicate when and how a motion of no confidence in the Executive Committee may be tabled and voted

- **Resignation:** Indicate how elected officers may resign
- **Finance:** Identify the assets of the association or union
- **Amendments to the Statutes:** Indicate how the Statutes may be amended and whether there are any exceptions
- **Entry into Force and Transitional Provisions:** Include the date on which the Statutes enter into force and, if transitional arrangements are required, explain those arrangements.

V. The Recognition Agreement

What is a recognition agreement?

A recognition agreement is a document signed by the association or union and the Executive Head of the organization whose staff are represented by the association or union, by which the Executive Head recognizes the association or union, under the provisions of the relevant Staff Regulation, as the representative of staff members of that organization, and that, except as indicated otherwise, any agreement entered into by the association or union will be applied to all staff members. A recognition agreement is granted for the purposes of consultation and negotiation.

A recognition agreement may include any or all of the following provisions:

- Confirmation of the right of the staff association or union to consult, be consulted and, where appropriate, negotiate on terms and conditions of employment and on any other matter which it is agreed directly affects the general welfare of the membership of the association or union
- Identification of the general principles under which the agreement will be applied
- Recognition of a reasonable amount of work time being devoted to staff representation activities, and of the need to hold periodic meetings of the Staff Committee and the membership
- Agreement to provide facilities, for example office space, clerical assistance, communications, etc., to the association or union.

How does the Staff Committee negotiate a recognition agreement?

The Staff Committee should prepare a draft recognition agreement for consideration by the Management and subsequently signed by the Executive Head. The FICSA secretariat can provide copies of such agreements in force in several organizations, as well as a model Agreement.

An established staff association or union, although officially recognized by the Executive Head, as such, but ignored in practice, may consider drafting a recognition agreement regarding consultation/negotiation mechanisms; facilities such as release time, office space, secretarial assistance; or the right to address governing bodies. Even if an established staff representative body has benefitted throughout the years from good staff/management relations, it is recommended to “put it in writing” thus avoiding the possibility of non-compliance by newcomers to the organization.

While some Executive Heads may attempt to ignore the provisions of a recognition agreement, such as unilaterally deciding to change a rule or policy without proper consultation, the fact that there is such a document strengthens the position of the staff representatives should they decide to challenge any such move through a formal appeal process.

VI. Creating a Staff Committee

How will the creators of the staff association or union decide on the size and composition of the Staff Committee?

Staff Committees come in all shapes and sizes. Generally, at a minimum, there are four main officers. There is a **President**, **Chairman** or **General Secretary** who represents the association or union with full powers in all legal and administrative matters, and presides over, or chairs, all meetings of the Committee and the Secretariat.

There may be a **Vice-President**, **Deputy General Secretary**, or in the event that there is a President, there may be a **General Secretary** as second-in-command. The person holding this office replaces the President, Chairman or General Secretary during his/her temporary absence or indisposition and assumes all his/her prerogatives. Some association or unions have **two Vice-Presidents**, and depending on the size of the Staff Committee, even three or four.

There may be a **Treasurer** who manages the funds of the association or union in accordance with the decisions of the Staff Committee and who is responsible for the bookkeeping and preparing the annual financial statement and budget. It is a good idea to create a separate position for the Treasurer, instead of assigning those tasks to another officer, to avoid opportunities for conflict of interest.

There may be an **Information Officer**, who is responsible for the information services of the association or union and for preparing the minutes of the meetings of the Staff Committee.

Additional officers may be responsible for legal or technical questions, or a particular condition of employment such as salaries, health insurance, pensions, or for the concerns of a particular category of staff such as Professional, General Service, National Professional Officers (NPO), or staff at non-headquarters duty stations.

The Terms of Reference for the officers, the length of terms of office and any limitation of the number of terms that can be served, consecutively or otherwise, may be included in the Statutes.

How is the Staff Committee elected?

The Staff Committee is generally elected within a few weeks after the annual Staff Assembly but there are no specific rules. Each staff association or union determines its own process.

How long is a term of office?

The members of the Staff Committee generally hold office for two years, some for one year only and may be re-elected. Often times, when the term of office is two years, half of the Committee is elected in alternate years.

How many terms of office can members of the Staff Committee stay in office?

Some associations and unions limit the number of consecutive terms of office for members of the Staff Committee, whereas for others there is no such limitation. One advantage of the possibility for unlimited terms is continuity and maintaining institutional memory. One advantage of limiting the number of terms of office is that new people with new ideas are given an opportunity to play an important role in the association or union.

VII. Dues

How much should be charged for dues?

Staff associations and unions in international organizations charge varying amounts of dues, while some have no dues collection procedures at all. Generally speaking, dues are based on a percentage of net salary to ensure that they are equitable; a flat amount, based on grade or grade groupings, may also be determined. For example, within the FICSA membership, dues vary from 0.13% to 0.5% of net base salary. Determining the amount of dues depends on what kind of services the staff association or union wishes to offer to its dues-paying members. For example, the union or staff association that offers a collective legal insurance, a legal defence fund or has a retainer with a lawyer, may establish monthly or annual fees accordingly.

How do members pay their dues?

The easiest method is automatic dues payment through payroll deduction, which the association or union will need to arrange with Management and the Payroll Unit. Members can also pay directly to the association or union. The disadvantage of the latter, is the lack of predictability, whereby dues can be easily withheld by a disgruntled staff or group of staff.

VIII. Membership

Should staff on any type of contract be permitted to join the association or union?

Associations and unions of international organizations generally limit membership to staff with a permanent or fixed-term contract. However, as there has been an increase in the number of staff working on short-term contracts, some associations and unions also include those staff as full members. Some allow staff on short-term contracts to hold elected office. This arrangement may be problematic if the contract expires while the staff member is still in office, because a new election may be required. It is also possible that Management might use the possibility of contract extension to pressure the official.

Should the association or union have both full members and associate members?

Associations and unions might consider creating a category of associate member for staff on short-term contracts, if they are not already included, as well as consultants, SSAs and independent contractors. It is important to remember that short-term staff and non-staff workers also have rights that will need to be defended, and that, oftentimes, their rights are ignored by Management. A special dues structure can be set up for associate members, and their rights within, and obligations towards, the association or union will need to be defined. For example, associate members might not be given the right to run for elected office. If this inclusion is not part of the original Statutes, such proposal will need to be put to the membership for their vote. Management might question the legitimacy of the intervention by the union or the staff association regarding issues affecting "non-staff"

How does the association or union attract members?

Staff are attracted to association or union membership when they understand and appreciate what the association or union does for them. It is therefore a key responsibility of the association or union to communicate its aims and achievements to all of the staff. Unfortunately, this aspect is often neglected resulting in unfair and misplaced comments by staff regarding its value and effectiveness.

There are several basic ways to do this: formal meetings; a publication; website and other modern social media platforms; social, cultural and sporting events; informal conversations with staff to promote the association or union; presentations to new staff during orientation sessions.

- **Formal staff meetings:** The Statutes will provide for an annual Staff Assembly, generally once or twice a year. This is a good opportunity to report to all staff about the major issues of concern, what the association or union is doing about them, and what the association or union has been able to achieve.
- **Publication:** A publication, such as a newsletter, magazine, or one-page flyer, issued on a regular basis either in hard copy or electronically, will keep staff informed about what the association or union is doing to defend and protect conditions of service.
- **Website:** A website devoted to the work of the association or union is an important vehicle for communicating in greater depth with the staff. There is greater scope for providing the details about issues and achievements, including the posting of technical and position papers that are used in negotiations or consultations with Management. However, the association or union must attract staff to visit the site. Therefore, the site should be mentioned in all publications, on the letterhead of the association or union and on posters.
- **Social media platforms:** Apart the traditional website, more modern approaches need to be considered for reaching a wider and diverse audience which allows members, with limited time, to read and interact more quickly
- **Social, cultural or sporting events:** Most, if not all, associations and unions organize social, cultural or sporting events, such as an annual Holiday Party or Staff Day Celebration, International Labour Day, concerts and book clubs or book sales, and sports clubs that arrange, for example, skiing and sailing weekends or tennis and chess tournaments. This is a good way of getting staff involved in

the life of the association or union. Some associations and unions organize fund-raising events to raise money for the Emergency Fund of the association or union, or for certain causes such as victims of natural disasters or scholarships for the children of slain staff members.

- **Informal conversations:** Association and union officers should make an effort to meet all of the staff, whether during special events or in the organization's cafeteria or coffee shop. Friendly relations with the staff are a key element in attracting staff to join the association or union because they help to build trust and create a positive image. Specific times can be scheduled to meet with staff.
- **Presentations to new staff during orientation:** Orientation sessions, in organizations where these are held, provide a good opportunity to the association or union to explain its aims and achievements to recently recruited staff and to get new staff members to sign up immediately for membership. Some associations and unions provide written information, such as flyers, a copy of a publication and a membership form, for inclusion in orientation files presented to new staff. If not already part of the orientation of new staff, the staff association or union should request to participate. There might be some opposition at first on the part of management; however, as an officially mandated and recognized part of the organization, the union or the association has a legitimate role to play in disseminating information to newly appointed staff on their rights of association.

Where no orientation or on-boarding programs exist for new staff at all categories, the staff association or union may want to advocate for such programs, not only to inform new staff about the mission and mandate of the organization, but also on services available to them such as counselling, mediation, medical insurance, pension, internal justice procedures, as well as to inform them of the kind of conduct expected of them as international civil servants.

IX. Function and role of the Staff Committee

An explanation about the names

There are several names for the executive office of the association or union: Staff Committee, Executive Committee, Staff Council and Executive Secretariat are commonly used. In this publication, "Staff Committee" will be used generically.

What is the composition of the Staff Committee?

The Staff Committee consists of members elected by the membership of the association or union for a term of office as set out in the Statutes.

How often should the Staff Committee meet?

The Staff Committee meets regularly - generally once a month. However, depending on the number of staff and the new and recurrent issues to be discussed, it may be necessary to meet more often. Whatever time frame, the meeting dates must be maintained and only cancelled with agreement by Committee members.

How many members of the Staff Committee constitute a quorum?

A quorum is generally not less than half the members of the Committee.

What are the Terms of Reference of the Staff Committee?

The Terms of Reference may include any or all of the following tasks:

- Appoint the officers of the association or union
- Evaluate and approve policy formulated by the Staff Committee
- Prepare and conduct negotiations regarding terms and conditions of employment, appointing the persons best suited to this task
- Foster unity of action
- Draw up the agenda of the Staff Assembly and publish the proceedings
- Submit annual financial statements and budgets to the Assembly
- Propose the amount of dues
- Be responsible for the management and investment of the funds of the association or union
- Approve applications for membership of the association or union
- Assist members in disputes with the Organization
- Keep staff informed by means of periodic publication of information
- Appoint representatives of the association or union to other internal and external bodies and ensure that they duly implement their terms of reference
- Ensure staff representatives (co-opted and elected) are fully trained to sit on various panels, working groups, advisory bodies, committees, etc.
- Approve the appointment of consultants and determine their emoluments
- Approve the rules governing elections, and the financial rules
- Appoint members of committees and sub-committees
- Approve the agenda for its own meetings.

X. Activities of the Staff Committee

How many meetings should be held with the general membership during the year?

Staff associations and unions always hold at least one Staff Assembly a year, and sometimes two such meetings are held in one year. Associations and unions generally make provisions in their Statutes for convening an Extraordinary Session of the Staff Assembly. Extraordinary Sessions may be convened whenever the Staff Committee or a designated number of staff deem necessary, for example for the purposes of organizing industrial action or obtaining the approval of the membership for a certain policy, strategy or action; or at the request of not less than one fifth of the membership.

How often should the Staff Committee meet with the Executive Head or other Officials?

Representatives of the Staff Committee should endeavour to meet with the Executive Head of the Organization or his or her designated representative at a minimum on a monthly basis to ensure that both parties keep each other informed about working life in the Organization, general staff concerns, decisions that have an impact on conditions of service and/or specific issues or grievances that merit the attention and/or intervention of the Executive Head or other responsible officers. Periodic meetings are valuable opportunities to maintain peace in the workplace and to solve problems before they grow too burdensome. Staff representatives should make sure that they are well-prepared for the meetings by sending an advance copy of the agenda and any discussion papers, knowing the subject matter well and staying focused on the issues identified for discussion.

While quality probably counts more than frequency, to ensure consistency, management and the staff representatives must agree on the periodicity of meetings, whether weekly, bi-weekly or on ad hoc basis (though the latter is to be discouraged) and be specified in the recognition agreement. Of importance is that though these meetings may be “informal” minutes of the meetings must be kept by the staff representative(s) for monitoring and follow-up purposes. Where meetings are formal and minuted, the staff representative(s) participating in the meeting need to ensure that discussions, agreements, disagreements and decisions taken are fully reflected the document.

How does the Staff Committee determine its work programme for the year?

Through meetings with staff in Staff Assemblies or individually, and through periodic staff surveys, the Committee learns about the issues of most concern to staff. Through meetings with Management, the Committee learns about proposals and decisions that affect terms and conditions of service. Based on that information, the Staff Committee sets out its annual work programme and identifies which elements of the work programme take priority. The competencies and skills of the members of the Committee will also help to determine the work programme, as Committee members will be unable to accomplish certain aims if the capacity to do so is lacking. The work programme should be adjusted accordingly, or the Committee should endeavour to co-opt members with the needed competencies.

How does the Staff Committee set priorities?

Staff associations and unions will have both long-term and short-term goals. An example of a long-term goal might be increasing maternity and paternity leave, whereas a short-

term goal might be to obtain flexi-time or negotiate fees for underground parking or organization-subsidized transport for staff in field offices. The Committee will need to decide the extent to which they will advocate for each of those issues. Meanwhile, emergency situations always arise, such as a decision by Management to cut a number of posts and to replace staff with external providers. The Staff Committee will need to decide whether to drop everything and focus only on the downsizing, or to continue to try to achieve its other goals. In the event that there is an emergency situation, convening an Extraordinary Session of the Staff Assembly will offer the Staff Committee an opportunity to seek the membership's advice and preferences.

How does the Staff Committee participate in joint staff-management bodies?

The Staff Regulations and Rules of most organizations make provision for various joint staff-management bodies for consultation on a broad array of issues. The composition of joint staff-management bodies is generally evenly divided between staff and Management representatives. The Staff Committee will need to assume the responsibility of providing the representatives of staff. There are two ways to do this: either by elected members of the Staff Committee, or by co-opting dues-paying members, respected and considered to be knowledgeable of the issues. The Staff Committee will need to make sure that Management is not responsible for selecting the representatives of staff, and will need to complain loudly if Management does so.

Is there a difference between elected “staff representatives” and elected “representatives of staff”?

There is a growing tendency to replace duly elected staff representatives of a union or staff association who sit on certain committees, such as selections, with “representatives of staff”, elected by staff at large following a call for interest by the Management, the purpose to weaken the role of the staff association, the union and their duly elected staff representatives. Staff associations and unions need to be vigilant. While elected staff representatives are empowered to and mandated to defend staff rights under a specific staff regulation or staff rule and are accountable to the Staff Committee and its lawfully approved Statutes and staff in general during the Staff Assemblies, the representatives of staff, on the other hand hold no such obligation of accountability to the Staff Committee as they are free agents.

How does the Staff Committee negotiate release time for its officers?

Guidelines for organizations belonging to the UN Common System were adopted at the inter-agency level in 1982 concerning release time for elected staff representatives. According to those guidelines, staff representatives shall be entitled to:

- Attend established meetings of the Staff Committee or corresponding staff representative body;
- Reasonable official time to attend meetings of related bodies;
- Reasonable official time to represent staff in joint advisory bodies, including standing committees, working groups, etc.;
- Release of the President: full time if number of staff members is 1000 or more, or half time if the number of staff members is less than 1000, although full time release may be exceptionally authorized;

- Attend intra-organizational, inter-organizational or intergovernmental meetings on official duty status, including appropriate travel time;
- Facilities needed to perform representational activities.

If it has not already negotiated a better arrangement, the Staff Committee will need to rely on these norms when negotiating release time for its officers. For increased release, staff representatives can argue that issues in 1982 were not as complex and numerous as they currently are thus necessitating another look at what constitutes a fair release to allow elected staff representatives to fully discharge their mandate. Staff associations and unions outside the common system are likewise statutory bodies of the organization. When negotiating release with their administrations, staff representatives can refer to the foregoing as guidelines as well as to a number of ILOAT judgments which have confirmed that unions must clearly be provided with sufficient facilities, within the framework of negotiated agreements or, if need be, administrative regulations, to enable them to carry on their activities.

How does the Staff Committee communicate with membership?

Most associations and unions communicate in an ad hoc way with the membership by issuing Staff Bulletins/Flashes/Updates/Spotlights - one or two-page flyers - whenever an important issue needs to be brought to the attention of the members to seek their support. In addition, some associations and unions have periodic paper publications such as a newsletter or magazine that is distributed desk-to-desk. Others rely on communicating electronically, either by email or posting information on the website of the association or union.

It is important to communicate with members on a regular basis by providing information about current activities, issues of general and specific concern and achievements. Since it may be difficult to get staff to visit the website of the association or union, the URL address of the website should be widely displayed, for example on letterhead, posters, all publications and in all electronic communication with staff which also should include information on membership application. Effective communication will help to build trust among staff, and will contribute to building up membership numbers, especially if achievements are brought to the front.

How does the Staff Committee seek changes to the Staff Regulations and Rules?

Amendments to the Staff Regulations and Rules generally require a decision of the Governing Body of the Organization. Each organization has its own requirements. The Staff Committee will need to present any such proposed amendment(s) to the Governing Body, or to go through the appropriate Management channels. The Staff Committee might, for example, submit its proposed changes for discussion in a joint staff-management body. The Committee will need to solicit the support of the Member States for the changes.

How does the Staff Committee provide legal advice to staff seeking to challenge an administrative decision?

Details about internal grievance procedures and machinery will, unfortunately, not be provided here because they are unique to each organization. However, it should be

expected that each organization would have issued instructions about its own unique system of internal justice. These instructions should be available in the respective staff regulations and rules, HR manuals, administrative directives and available electronically on intranet sites. Staff regulations of many organizations can also be found on line. Staff associations or unions also have a critical role to play in disseminating this information.

Members of the Staff Committee need to be fully knowledgeable about established procedures for challenging administrative decisions or for resolving disputes internally and about filing a complaint with an administrative tribunal. The two main tribunals recognized as having jurisdiction by international organizations are the International Labour Organization Administrative Tribunal (ILOAT) and the United Nations Appeals Tribunal (UNAT), which replaced the former United Nations Administrative Tribunal. Other international organizations such as the World Bank the Organization of American States (OAS) or NATO have their own administrative tribunals and do not use the ILOAT or UNAT. The ILOAT hears complaints from serving and former officials of most UN specialized agencies, such as ILO, ITU, WIPO, UNESCO, FAO, WHO and other international organizations such as CERN, OPCW, EPO, TGF, etc. which have recognized the jurisdiction of the ILOAT. Other specialized agencies such as the IMO, ICAO and most recently the WMO have recognized the jurisdiction of the UNAT. Staff from these agencies can appeal directly to the UNAT having first exhausted their own internal appeal procedures.

Information on the ILOAT, the full list of the membership and the Guide to the procedure can be found at: http://www.ilo.org/tribunal. The Triblex searchable case law database will be useful to anyone seeking legal arguments to support an internal appeal or who is considering submitting a complaint to the ILOAT. Knowledge of precedent, as the New Guide informs, may help in determining whether a suit is worth pursuing and if so, how to proceed.

The following website, http://www.un.org/en/internaljustice/ explains the various components of the UN's internal system of justice – the Office of the Staff Legal Assistance (OSLA); the UN Dispute Tribunal (UNDT) and the UN Appeals Tribunal (UNAT) - and describes how to resolve work-related disputes informally and if necessary, formally. Staff representatives should review this website to learn about the resources available to staff when seeking resolution of a dispute and the steps they need to take to proceed. A table provide lists which staff can make use of each of the three components and which cannot. Staff from some entities can appeal administrative decisions directly to UNAT without applying to the UNDT first. For example, the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) has its own dispute tribunal. The decisions of the UNRWA Dispute Tribunal can be appealed to UNAT.

Some associations and unions retain the services of an attorney to advise the association or union and individual staff members about their grievances and appeals. Others provide legal insurance for their members to cover the costs of seeking recourse. This type of insurance generally requires that the aggrieved staff member use the services of a lawyer provided by the insurance company or cleared by the staff association or union. FICSA provides information about legal insurance and maintains a roster of legal advisers, which is made available to its members.

In spite of these various information channels available to them, staff still, foolishly, lose valid appeals because they filed requests for administrative review, internal appeals or complaints to the tribunals out of time. Periodic training for staff at large should be organized by the staff association or union on the internal justice system in individual organizations especially on issues such as performance management, disciplinary procedures, harassment and interpersonal conflict, classification reviews, post abolition and reassignment rights, claims for service incurred illness, selections, etc.

How does the Staff Committee work with the Ombudsman?

It has become more common for organizations to have an ombudsman, either appointed or elected to take up the functions on a volunteer basis or selected through a competitive process on an established post. Each organization regulates its own process of dispute resolution.

The UN Secretariat has a fully staffed Office of the United Nations Ombudsman and Mediation Services which can be found at: http://www.un.org/en/ombudsman/meddivision.shtm. These services are available to staff of UN the Secretariat; staff of UN Funds and Programmes (UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNOPS and UN Women) and staff of UNHCR. They are not available to staff of the specialized agencies, which normally should have their own ombudsmen or mediators.

The Ombudsman is meant to be a neutral party in labour disputes, taking neither the side of the staff member nor that of the Management. The Staff Committee therefore does not in fact work with the Ombudsman, but instead refers individual cases of interpersonal or administrative conflict for resolution by the Ombudsman.

Would it be reasonable for the Staff Committee to expect the Ombudsman to report on the cases referred by the Committee to the Office of the Ombudsman? Some associations and unions would consider that, as the neutral party, the ombudsman should report neither to the Staff Committee nor to the Management. Rather, the Ombudsman should report directly to the Executive Head. The Staff Committee should feel free, on the other hand, to meet with the Ombudsman to alert him or her of trends of inappropriate behaviour in certain departments it has observed during its interaction with staff or to work together on specific issues such as the promotion of a respectful workplace or fair employment practices.

While consultations with the Ombudsman are confidential, the annual report summarizing the number and type of cases addressed, without mentioning names should be made available to all staff. The report should include an overview of the Ombudsman's activities and comments on policies, procedures and practices that have come to his or her attention.

What are the working languages of the Staff Committee?

Most international civil servants within the UN, are expected to be able to work in at least two of the official working languages Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish, in the performance of their duties. This does not however take into account the many locally recruited staff who may speak another language that is not considered "official". The staff association or union will need to endeavour to ensure

that it is able to communicate with staff in at least one official language, and the most prevalent language used by local staff. For example, one Rome-based union publishes its communiqués in both English and Italian, others in French and Portuguese.

How does the Staff Committee convey its views to Management?

For those staff associations and unions that form part of the UN Common System, attention is drawn to the often forgotten ICSC Framework on Human Resources Management which can be found at http://commonsystem.org/hrframework/ in an interactive format. In 2000, the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) adopted a Framework for Human Resources Management. Due to the significant changes that have taken place in the world of work since then, the framework was revised in 2017. The fundamental values of the UN common system endure and the principles that govern the practice of human resources management continue to be relevant. "The focus of the revised framework is strategic human resources management which is a key aspect of overall organizational strategy. It is intended as a practical guide in the provision of authoritative, strategic advice in the area of human resources management to decision makers. It reinforces the role of the human resources function in the achievement of individual organizational mandates while safeguarding the cohesion of the United Nations common system."

The Framework sets out the broad principle of staff representation and staff-management relations - Staff representatives should be fully involved in and contribute to decisions affecting all matters relating to personnel/human resources policies and practices. It lists the obligations of the Organizations in maintaining effective staff/management relations and policies and advocates for appropriate mechanism to be in place:

- Organizations should formally recognize the legitimate role of staff representatives in representing the views of staff on all matters relating to personnel/human resources policies and practices.
- Organizations should ensure that staff representatives are fully informed on matters affecting conditions of service and consulted on those related to personnel/ human resources policies and practices.
- Organizations should ensure that appropriate mechanisms are established to offer the opportunity for staff representatives to participate in and influence decisions affecting personnel/human resources policies and practices.

When Management does not respect those roles, the Staff Committee should draw its attention to the Framework. It should also draw its attention to the legal framework and provisions set out in the organization's staff regulations and staff rules governing employment relations, and of course to the Recognition Agreement, if one exists.

What of those international organizations that do not belong to the UN Common System?

Most, if not all international organizations have provisions in their staff regulations on the right of association, staff representation, staff relations, etc. which set out the role and responsibilities of both the staff representatives and the organization. They can also refer to existing recognition agreements. Staff can also refer to ILO Conventions such as 87 (Freedom of Association) and 98 (Right to Organize). In addition, the staff

representatives can cite various administrative tribunal cases which have upheld the right of association, consultation and negotiation where these are specifically or implicitly expressed in the legal framework of the organization. Should none of these methods work, a last option is to address the governing body and apprise them of the situation.

Joint Staff-Management Bodies

As mentioned earlier, the staff regulations and rules of most organizations make provision for various joint staff-management bodies for consultation on a broad array of personnel/human resources issues. Such bodies ideally meet on a regular basis and give staff representatives the opportunity to become informed about human resources issues and to contribute fully to the decisions made. Examples of this type of machinery include the Staff-Management Coordinating Committee (SMCC) at the United Nations, and Joint Advisory Boards or Committees at other organizations.

In addition, the Management of most organizations will create consultative bodies that focus on single issues. Examples of this type of body most prevalent within international organizations include: Recruitment and Selection Panels, Appointment and Promotion Boards, Disciplinary Committees, Appeal Boards, Pension Committees and Grievance Committees. Other joint bodies may deal with other issues, for example, Safety and Security, Staff Benevolent Fund, Catering Services, Health and Safety, Job Classification, Health Insurance, Staff Development and Training, Employment of Women, Management makes provision for staff to participate in such bodies.

As a general rule, staff associations and unions either appoint or elect the people who will be representing staff, who may or may not be members of the Staff Committee, but whose selection will be based on the expertise required. There are generally two notable exceptions to this practice: staff at large - even those who are not members of an association or union - can stand directly for election to a Pension Committee and an Appeals Board.

Meetings with the Executive Head or his/her Representative

In addition to the formal staff-management machinery, most staff associations and unions meet with the Executive Head and/or his/her delegated representative, generally on an ad hoc basis. Others have a more formal scheduling arrangement. This type of meeting can be useful in drawing the attention of the Head of the Organization to the important role played by staff representatives in the development and implementation of personnel policies and procedures. Such meetings may also serve to present the position of staff on an issue, or to heighten the pressure for outcomes that are suitable to staff in the best interests of the Organization. As Executive Head, it is in his/her interest to meet with and maintain contact with the Staff Committee, to enable him/her to "take the pulse" of the people who carry out the organization's mission. Another benefit of this type of meeting is the opportunity it provides to address differences of opinion before they grow into problems.

Meetings with the delegated representative of the Executive Head

Generally speaking, the Executive Head delegates authority to the Director of Human Resources to consult with the Staff Committee or in some cases a Staff Relations Officer, to keep staff and staff representatives informed about human resources policies and practices. Most associations and unions meet on a regular basis with the Director of Human Resources or his/her representative.

Other ways of conveying views to Management

There may be occasions for communicating with Management outside the formal joint staff-management machinery. For example, when an association or union does not meet regularly - or at all - with the Executive Head, it will generally send its views in writing to the Executive Head. Letters, position or policy papers and resolutions of the Staff Committee are an effective way of conveying views to the Executive Head, particularly in instances in which it has been difficult or impossible to arrive at a satisfactory solution using the formal machinery.

Industrial action, working to rule or strike action are also effective - but extreme - ways of conveying the views of staff. They are generally only used when the Staff Committee considers that its views were not heard or given adequate consideration in decision-making. Industrial action can take many forms: a lunchtime walkout, a noisy or silent gathering outside the room in which an important managerial or governing body meeting is being held, an email campaign targeted to decision-makers, an Extraordinary Staff Assembly. Working to rule is a tactic that involves staff working a strict eight- hour daily schedule, and not a minute more. Strike action is when staff walk off the job during work hours, but remain on the premises of the Organization.

Using the Media

The Standards of Conduct for the International Civil Service, which can be found on the ICSC website: https://icsc.un.org/ provide the following guidance on relations with the media.

> *"Openness and transparency in relations with the media are effective means of communicating the organizations' messages. The organizations should have guidelines and procedures in place for which the following principles should apply: international civil servants should regard themselves as speaking in the name of their organizations and avoid personal references and views; in no circumstances should they use the media to further their own interests, to air their own grievances, to reveal unauthorized information or to attempt to influence their organizations' policy decisions."*

No doubt that international organizations will each have provisions in their staff rules or manuals governing the use of media by its staff. The UN and its specialized agencies have adopted comparable staff rules on relations with the media. For example, the Staff Rule 101.2 of the UN provides the following:

101.2 "Basic rights and obligations of staff"

> *"Staff members shall not, except in the normal course of official duties or with the prior approval of the Secretary-General, engage in any of the following acts, if such act relates to the purpose, activities or interests of the United Nations:*

i. Issue statements to the press, radio or other agencies of public information;

ii. Accept speaking engagements;

iii. Take part in film, theatre, radio, or television productions; iv. Submit articles, books or other material for publication."

How do the principles and rules governing relations with the media apply to staff associations and unions?

The Standards of Conduct set out the principles governing elected staff representatives, including that of freedom of expression:

> *"Elected staff representatives enjoy rights that derive from their status; this may include the opportunity to address the legislative organs of their organization. These rights should be exercised in a manner that is consistent with the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the international covenants on human rights, and does not undermine the independence and integrity of the international civil service. In using the broad freedom of expression they enjoy, staff representatives must exercise a sense of responsibility and avoid undue criticism of the organization."*

The Standards of Conduct also include the principle of providing protections to elected staff representatives:

> *"Staff representatives must be protected against discriminatory or prejudicial treatment based on their status or activities as staff representatives, both during their term of office and after it has ended. Organizations should avoid unwarranted interference in the administration of their staff unions or associations."*

Can a Staff Committee use the media to further its aims?

Taking into account the general principles outlined in the Standards of Conduct, including both restrictive and facilitating principles, associations and unions will need to refer to their Organization's Staff Regulations and Rules to learn whether or not a Staff Committee is permitted to meet with representatives of the media. At present, some associations are expressly forbidden to do so. In which case, the Staff Committee will need to work towards changing restrictive rules. In the meanwhile, associations and unions that are members of FICSA will be able to request the Federation's assistance in seeking media coverage of their cause.

Can FICSA help associations and unions convey their views to the Management?

FICSA is willing to meet with the Management of any of its member associations and unions, either formally or informally - for example, at a meeting of an inter-agency body such as the HR Network or the High Level Committee on Management (HLCM) - or to write to an Executive Head of a non UN organization to seek support for a position, a solution to a problem or the end to an impasse. FICSA is also able to organize and coordinate campaigns of support, in which the entire membership will write to an Executive Head.

Does the Staff Committee play a role in the social and cultural life of the staff?

Most, if not all, staff associations and unions organize social and cultural events that are open to all staff members, consultants and temporary workers. This type of event, for

example, an art exhibition, a celebration of Staff Day, a children's holiday celebration or a fund-raising event, provides an excellent opportunity for staff to become more familiar with the association or union and its work. Some associations and unions provide socio-cultural services to staff, for example, a book club/library, a DVD club/library, reductions on car rentals, low-cost organized tours, tickets to special events. These types of activities and services serve to bring the staff community closer together and to attract new members to the association or union.

If the Organization does not have an Ombudsman or Mediator, does the Staff Committee mediate in disputes?

One of the important Terms of Reference of a Staff Committee is to assist the members of the association or union in any disputes with the Organization. The decision as to how that assistance is provided will be the result of discussion between the aggrieved member and the Staff Committee.

Assuming the role of mediator in a conflict might be seen as a conflict of interest for a Staff Committee. Because Staff Committees advocate on behalf of their members, their neutrality during mediation might be questioned. It would therefore be preferable for the Staff Committee to arrange for a neutral third party to mediate disputes. However, if Management assigns an HR Officer to mediate, the Staff Committee should insist that it be permitted to participate in the mediation as well should the staff member so request.

How does a Staff Committee negotiate a new HR policy with Management?

When the Staff Committee has taken a decision that it will work towards the adoption of a new HR policy, such as increasing maternity leave and paternity leave or having a staff representative on a selection panel, or removing the limit for temporary contracts, it will need to build its supporting case. A first step will be to gather information from other associations and unions on whether their organizations have already adopted the same, or a related, policy. FICSA facilitates accessing information on HR policies and practices in two ways. The FICSA website, www.ficsa.org, contains an HR database in the Members Only area. The database contains HR policies and practices throughout the organizations of its membership. If FICSA does not already have the needed information, it will canvas the membership and post a summary of the replies on its site.

When the background information has been analysed, the Staff Committee will need to draft a policy paper, explaining the reasons for requesting a new policy or changing an existing one, which might include: data on similar policies throughout the common system; the benefits to staff and to the Organization; and whether there are any cost implications or other potential impacts on the functioning of the Organization.

The policy paper will be presented to Management for deliberation at a meeting of the relevant joint staff-management consultative body. If no such body is scheduled, or upcoming, the Staff Committee will present the paper to Management for its consideration, and ask that Management meet with the Staff Committee to discuss the proposal, and make a decision without reference to a formal body.

What should the Staff Committee do if Management refuses to adopt a new HR policy?

If, after consultation with the Staff Committee, Management refuses to adopt the new policy, or to revise an existing policy, the Staff Committee will need to mobilize the support of members and staff-at-large. Effective mobilization depends on effective communication with the staff. The Staff Committee will need to inform all staff about its reasons for wishing to adopt or change a policy, and to report on the discussions that had taken place with Management, providing information on Management's reasons for rejecting the new policy. The Staff Committee will either organize an information meeting for staff, or inform them by email. Displaying posters and distributing flyers also help to mobilize staff, and to show Management the extent of staff support for policy change. Petitions are similarly an effective way of putting pressure on Management, especially when a majority of staff signs the petition. Once the Staff Committee judges that staff have been adequately mobilized, it should request another meeting with Management to ask whether Management is ready to reconsider its position. At this point, both sides will need to consider making concessions to arrive at a mutually agreed solution. However, if Management refuses to meet, or to reconsider its position, staff mobilization should move to the next stage. During the next stage, the Staff Committee will need to be prepared to lead staff in industrial action, work to rule or strike action. Sometimes, the threat of these extreme actions is enough to get Management to return to the bargaining table. If not, please refer to the question on how to organize industrial action.

How does the Staff Committee organize industrial action (extreme tactics)?

The first step in organizing industrial action generally is convening an Extraordinary Session of the Staff Assembly. The Staff Committee will need to present its case to the membership to seek the members' full support, and will need to be well prepared to reply to questions from the membership. Because industrial action is an extreme tactic, the support of the full membership is a particularly important element of a successful action. The Staff Committee will need to endeavor to obtain as much support as possible from the Staff Assembly, whether by consensus or by vote. Another factor contributing to the success of an industrial action is making sure that the focus is clear. The Staff Committee will need to carefully define exactly what it wants from Management and present that demand in straightforward language. Actions are generally more successful when limited to one — and not more than just a few — clear-cut demands.

Once a majority of staff are on-board, a number of decisions will need to be made:

- Date, time, place and duration of the action
- Request for volunteers
- Delegation of tasks
- Type of action, for example, a walk-out, work-to-rule or other
- Whether promotional material will be needed, for example, posters, flyers, T-shirts, armbands, whistles, banners, placards, flags, etc.
- What slogan best represents staff demands
- Notifying the media, FICSA and other associations and unions
- Seeking letters of support from FICSA and other associations and unions

- Whether the action will be silent or noisy?
- Whether to have speaker(s) and who they will be ?
- What to do if Management wishes to talk?
- What to do if Management does not wish to talk?
- How much time will be accorded to Management for its response?
- Follow-up action.

The Staff Committee will need to allow ample time to prepare the action. It may wish to create an Action Committee to oversee the preparations, drawing also on members participating in the Staff Assembly.

Once the action has been completed, it will be important to allow some time for Management to respond, if they have not done so immediately. If a response is not forthcoming in a few days, the Staff Committee will need to ask for a meeting with Management. Sometimes several rounds of industrial action will be required to maintain pressure on Management.

How does the Staff Committee decide when to give up on an issue?

While most people will be familiar with the saying, "a quitter never wins and a winner never quits", there will be times when the Staff Committee will decide it is time to throw in the towel and admit defeat. How will the Staff Committee make this type of decision?

Assuming that the Staff Committee has fully exhausted all of its options, including the most extreme ones, the following circumstances will give a clear signal that Management has prevailed:

- Management has made its decision or taken a definitive action that puts an end to the issue
- Management refuses to enter into discussions on the issue
- Management informs the Staff Committee that it will no longer discuss the issue
- Legal challenges are not an option or have already been unsuccessful.

In such circumstances, the Staff Committee will need to record its firm objections by writing formally to Management and the Executive Head, and to express its disappointment and/or indignation at the failure to arrive at a mutually agreeable and beneficial outcome. The Staff Committee can also include those points in its annual address to the Governing Body.

The Staff Committee will also need to review the strategy it had used in order to assess where it might have gone wrong. A useful tool to carry out this type of assessment is called a SWOT analysis. A SWOT analysis identifies Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats.

What is a SWOT analysis?

Strengths:

- What advantages did you have?
- What did you do well?
- What relevant resources did you have access to?
- What do other people see as your strengths?

Consider this from your own point of view and from the point of view of the other members of the Staff Committee. Don't be modest. Be realistic. If you are having any difficulty with this, try writing down a list of your characteristics. Some of these will hopefully be strengths.

In looking at your strengths, think about them in relation to Management.

Weaknesses:

- What could you improve?
- What did you do badly?
- What should you have avoided?

Again, consider this from an internal and external basis: Does Management seem to perceive weaknesses that you do not see? It is best to be realistic, and face any unpleasant truths as soon as possible.

Opportunities:

- Where were the good opportunities facing you?
- What are the interesting trends you are aware of?

Useful opportunities can come from such things as:

- Changes that have been introduced in other organizations
- Changes in policies or guidelines at the inter-agency level
- Local events.

A useful approach to looking at opportunities is to look at your strengths and ask yourself whether these open up any opportunities. Alternatively, look at your weaknesses and ask yourself whether you could open up opportunities by eliminating them.

Threats:

- What obstacles did you face?
- What was Management doing?
- Did any of your weaknesses seriously threaten your position?

Carrying out this analysis will often be useful - both in terms of pointing out what needs to be done, and in putting problems into perspective.

The Staff Committee can also apply SWOT analysis to Management. This may help to identify Management's weaknesses and point the way to opportunities for advancing an issue in the future.

Timing is everything. Sometimes the failure to achieve progress on an issue may be due to timing: it was simply not the right time to pursue it. This can mean that the issue should not be abandoned altogether, but rather that it might be more successfully pursued at a later date - for example, after a key opponent retires or transfers, or other facilitating elements have been put into place.

How does the Staff Committee provide assistance to individual members?

There are many types of workplace grievances. These include disputes with colleagues and supervisors, unfavourable or questionable administrative decisions - for example, contract termination or non-renewal, or transfer against one's will; post abolition and non-reassignment, disciplinary sanctions, disagreement over performance ratings; procedures that were not followed correctly; harassment; being unsuccessful in a competition for a post, etc.

It is the job of the Staff Committee, according to its Terms of Reference, to assist its members with their grievances, and to inform them about their rights in any situation. To do this, the members of the Staff Committee will need, first and foremost, to have an in-depth knowledge of the Staff Regulations and Rules, policies, administrative directives, etc. and to be able to interpret them as they apply to each type of grievance with which they are presented. Secondly, although no less important than the first, members of the Staff Committee will need to be absolutely discreet and to guarantee the confidentiality of any information provided by the person seeking assistance. Thirdly, and of no less importance than the first two points, the Staff Committee should be fully knowledgeable about the formal internal grievance machinery and how to launch an appeal at an Administrative Tribunal.

Associations and unions have more or less formal procedures for assisting members. The formality of the procedure probably will be related to the availability of the members of the Staff Committee, based on the amount of time they are released from their jobs for staff representative activities. When, for example, the President or Chairperson of the Staff Committee enjoys full-time release, there would be more opportunity to dedicate a certain amount of time each day or week for consultation with individuals having grievances. In the event that no Staff Committee member is released full-time, consultations with individual members might take place less frequently. Thus the following generic procedure would need to be adapted to the circumstances of each association and union.

A formal procedure for assisting individual staff members having grievances might follow these steps:

- Identify a regular time and/or day of the week for meeting with individual staff members with grievances.
- Inform all staff by email and post the information prominently throughout the building(s). Include information about whether staff need to make an appointment or whether drop-ins are welcome.
- Select a member or several members of the Staff Committee, for example on a rotational basis, to carry out this task.
- Register the staff member's grievance, and his or her name only if the staff member agrees.
- Listen to the grievance and take notes.
- Identify options to address the grievance in consultation with the staff member. Options might include referral to an ombudsman, helping the staff member to interpret a rule or know his/her rights, referral to an attorney, providing advice on internal grievance procedures or appealing to an administrative tribunal, seeking mediation in a dispute, etc.
- Seek more information and assistance from other Staff Committee members if required.
- Ask the staff member to reflect on the options discussed and to decide on what action will be taken, and what support will be sought from the Staff Committee.
- Convene a weekly meeting of the Staff Committee to discuss ongoing grievances and obtain agreement on providing continuing support, and identify who will be responsible for providing that support.
- Prepare a note for the record, and classify it according to the type of grievance. At the end of the year, compile the data on types of grievance and report to the Staff Assembly and Management. The report will need to identify trends, repeated abuses in a particular division of the organization or by an individual, etc. The report should respect the confidentiality of the procedure by not naming the individuals involved.
- If a trend, or widespread problem is revealed, ask Management to take firm action.

Does the Staff Committee provide assistance to individual staff members who are not members of the association or union?

Some associations and unions provide assistance only to their members, while others offer to help all staff. This is usually with a proviso that while assistance and advice is provided, non-dues paying members are responsible for any legal fees incurred in filing grievances. One advantage of providing assistance to all staff is that it can help to attract new members. One disadvantage is that it may put a strain on already limited resources and also encourage “free riders”.

How does the Staff Committee defend the rights of staff who work away from the duty station in which the Committee has its offices?

Some of the organizations in the UN system have a substantial number of staff working away from the Headquarters office, in Regional Offices and Country Offices. This geographical separation can complicate the efforts of a Headquarters-based Staff Committee to defend the rights of those staff. One solution adopted in one organization

has been to establish separate and independent Staff Associations in each Regional Office, each with its own Staff Committee. The Committees work together on global issues, and separately on local issues. Input from all is included in the annual statement to the Governing Body.

In other organizations with substantial field presence, the Headquarters-based staff association or union has promoted the creation of local associations or unions in each duty station. Again, the local associations or unions address local issues, while the Headquarters-based association or union addresses global issues. Because the Headquarters-based association or union is located at the seat of decision-making power, it generally assumes the responsibility of bringing the concerns of all staff, regardless of location, to the relevant authorities, and will undertake to provide assistance to individuals outside Headquarters when it has been impossible to achieve a satisfactory solution locally.

When an organization has very few staff working in a Country Office or duty station, is it worthwhile to create a staff association or union?

It is always worthwhile to create a staff association or union. In duty stations in which each organization represented has a very limited staff presence, FICSA promotes the creation of a local Federation of UN Staff Associations (FUNSA). These small inter-agency Federations address local issues of concern to all staff at the duty station, while the relevant Headquarters-based staff association or union generally addresses global concerns, and provides assistance as necessary. FICSA has drafted Model Statutes for FUNSA which can be found on the FICSA website. A FUNSA may become a member of FICSA, with observer status.

In some HQ duty stations where there is a mixture of UN and non-UN agencies, such as Rome, Paris, London, Vienna or Washington, D.C. staff associations and unions have set up groups which meet on a regular basis to discuss local issues and share experiences. Too often, due to lack of time or resources, unions and staff associations isolate themselves unnecessarily failing to reach out to sister organizations that are in the same locality, when they could be a source of support and information.

How does the Staff Committee ensure that policies approved at inter-agency level are implemented in the Organization?

Decisions about HR policies and practices are made at two levels: the individual organization will make some HR decisions in accordance with the flexibility granted to them to do so, while other decisions and recommendations will be made by an inter-agency body such as the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC), the UN General Assembly, the High Level Committee on Management (HLCM) or the HR Network.

When an inter-agency body makes decisions, the Management of each Organization is expected to implement them. However, that has not been the case recently. The most glaring example is the following. The UN General Assembly decided in its resolution 70/244 dated 23 December 2015 that the mandatory age of separation (MAS) for staff recruited before 1 January 2014 should be raised by the Organization of the United Nations common system to 65 years of age at the latest by 1 January 2018, taking into account the acquired rights of staff. While some agencies implemented the resolution

effective 1 January 2018, others have not, opting to postpone to later dates. The MAS was a very contentious issue with some Executive Heads and HR Directors strongly opposing the UNGA date of implementation, while the staff representative bodies fought hard that it be implemented as soon as possible.

To monitor implementation, the Staff Committee must first be knowledgeable about what has been decided. FICSA reports regularly on the decisions and recommendations taken at inter-agency level. The Staff Committee will need to pay serious attention to the FICSA reports to note the arguments it raised in support or opposition, decisions and recommendations with HR implications. The Staff Committee will need to raise those decisions with Management at the regularly scheduled consultative meeting and ask how and when Management plans to implement them.

XI. Function and role of the Staff Assembly

What are the role and functions of the Staff Assembly?

The Staff Assembly is the sovereign decision-making body of the association or union and consists of all its members. The Staff Assembly generally has final responsibility for approval of the policies and activities of the association or union. The Assembly:

- Considers the annual report of the Staff Committee, and any relevant motions or resolutions
- Decides on matters basic to the activities of the association or union, after having heard the report of the Staff Committee
- Approves the annual financial statement and budget submitted by the Staff Committee, after having first heard the report of the Board of Auditors
- Decides on the revision of the Statutes, Rules of Procedure and Financial Rules of the association or union
- Approves the annual dues
- Elects the Staff Committee, Board of Auditors (and other bodies according to the Statute, for example, an Ethics Committee, Statutes Committee, etc.)

What is the membership of the Staff Assembly?

The Staff Assembly consists of all of the dues-paying members of the association or union. Generally, all staff are permitted to attend, but in some organizations only dues-paying members of the association or union are allowed to vote on matters with financial implications.

How many sessions of the Staff Assembly are there each year?

The Staff Assembly generally meets not less than once annually in Ordinary Session. An Extraordinary Session can be convened usually at the request of not less than 20% of the membership, or at the decision of the Staff Committee.

What does the agenda for the Staff Assembly include?

The Staff Committee will be responsible for drawing up the provisional agenda for the Staff Assembly. The provisional agenda for the Staff Assembly will include the following items:

- Election of the Presiding Officer
- Adoption of the agenda
- Approval of the minutes of the last Staff Assembly
- Address by the President/Chairperson of the Staff Committee
- Financial Report of the Staff Committee
- Report of the Board of Auditors
- Consideration of the Annual report of the Staff Council and any relevant motions or resolutions
- Consideration of committee report (if the Statutes provide for committees)
- Appointment of the Auditors; election of Polling Officers
- Other business

The provisional agenda will also include all items proposed by the Staff Committee and any item proposed in writing to the Staff Committee by at least 5% of the members of the association or union. Time limits are usually established to ensure that members receive the reports prior to the Staff Assembly, to give them enough time to fully review the documentation.

How is business conducted at the Staff Assembly?

A quorum, which is a specified minimum number of members, or percentage of members of the association or union, will need to be continuously present to enable the Staff Assembly to conduct its business. If a quorum has not been reached, the Staff Assembly generally will stand adjourned for a defined period of time, (for example, two weeks from the same time and place), unless the members present fix another time and place. Members of the association or union will need to be informed of the adjusted time and place.

Who is permitted to vote at the Staff Assembly?

In some organizations, only members of the staff association or union are permitted to vote. In others, non-members can vote on decisions affecting staff in general but not on budget decisions.

How is a vote carried out?

Each member of the association or union will be entitled to one vote. Some associations and unions permit members to be represented by a proxy, while others do not.

XII. Inter-agency bodies that make decisions affecting conditions of service

What is the Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB)?

The United Nations System Chief Executives Board (CEB) for Coordination - formerly the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) - is the forum which brings the executive heads of all organizations together to further coordination and cooperation on the whole range of substantive and management issues facing the United Nations system. Chaired by the Secretary- General of the United Nations, the Board meets twice annually. It is composed of the Executive Heads of the member organizations and is assisted by two high level committees, the High Level Committee on Programmes (HLCP) and the High Level Committee on Management (HLCM).

ACC was established by the Secretary-General in 1946 at the request of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in Resolution 13 (III). The main purpose of the Committee was to supervise the implementation of the agreements between the United Nations and the specialized agencies. Since then, its mandate has grown to encompass the promotion of cooperation within the UN family in the pursuit of the common goals of Member States across a wide range of substantive and management issues.

From its original four members (UN, ILO, FAO and UNESCO), CEB today comprises twenty-eight member organizations, including UN funds and programmes as well as specialized agencies, WTO and the Bretton Woods institutions.

What is the High Level Committee on Management (HLCM)?

The High Level Committee on Management (HLCM) is the principal inter-agency body for coordination in the administration and management areas, particularly regarding financial and budgetary issues; human resources related issues; information and communication technology issues; and staff security within the UN system. It was established by the CEB in October 2000. Its main function is to advise CEB on administration and management issues that are of system-wide importance and to promote inter-agency cooperation and coordination on these matters on behalf of CEB. HLCM is composed of senior representatives with responsibilities in administration and management from member organizations and authorized to take decisions on behalf of their Executive Heads.

What is the Human Resources (HR) Network?

At its second regular session in 2000, ACC decided inter alia that issues on the current work programme of the HR Directors would be pursued through task forces and on behalf of ACC/HLCM, common system HR directors would meet immediately before sessions of ICSC - normally for not more than three days - to review all matters under consideration by ICSC in order to determine common positions to put forward before ICSC and to select their spokesperson(s) and authorize them to make representations on behalf of ACC/HLCM. The HR Managers of the UN System or their representatives met for the first time under these new arrangements at UN Headquarters from 5 through 7 June 2001 prior to the fifty-third session of ICSC, held at the headquarters of ICAO from 11-29 June.

What is the Task Force on HIV/AIDS in the UN Workplace?

The purpose of this Task Force is to monitor the implementation of the UN Personnel Policy on HIV/AIDS, which says that the UN will make sure that all staff and their families know about HIV so that they can protect themselves and others, and so that they can work with HIV-positive colleagues without fear of becoming infected. The UN will make sure that staff have access to good quality training and condoms to avoid infection.

The policy says that the UN will provide support and counselling services to any of its staff or their families upon request. It also says that a person's HIV status is his/her own affair and must be treated by the UN and all its offices as confidential at all times.

The policy guarantees that no one will be discriminated against because of HIV. No one will be required to have an HIV test to gain employment, remain employed, or have his/her contract renewed. People who are ill because of HIV infection will have the same rights and benefits as people who are ill through any other cause. This applies to all staff, from the Secretary-General to short-term, locally employed staff.

Members of the Task Force include representatives of Management, the staff and the UN system medical service.

What is the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC)?

The International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) is an independent expert body established by the United Nations General Assembly. Its mandate is to regulate and coordinate the conditions of service of staff in the United Nations common system, while promoting and maintaining high standards in the international civil service.

The Commission is composed of fifteen members who serve in their personal capacity. They are appointed by the General Assembly for four-year terms, with due regard for broad geographical representation. The Chairman and the Vice-Chairman are full-time members and are based in the ICSC secretariat in New York. The full Commission meets twice a year.

The Commission makes recommendations and decisions on the terms and conditions of UN system staff.

What is the Advisory Committee on Post Adjustment Questions (ACPAQ)?

ICSC is assisted by an expert subsidiary body, the Advisory Committee on Post Adjustment Questions (ACPAQ), which provides technical advice on the operation of the post adjustment system. Other working groups and panels are established on an ad hoc basis as the need arises.

ACPAQ is composed of six members and is chaired by the Vice Chairman of ICSC.

ACPAQ usually meets every year to review methodological and other technical issues related to the operation of the post adjustment system, and to make recommendations for the consideration and approval of the Commission.

What is the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Board (UNJSPB)?

The Pension Board governs the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund (UNJSPF). It meets every other year. In the years in which the Board does not have a session, its Standing Committee meets. The Board has a tripartite composition including the representatives of the participants, the administrations of participating organizations and the Member States.

The Fund is administered by the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Board, a staff pension committee for each member organization and a secretariat to the Pension Board and to each staff pension committee. The Pension Board reports to and formulates recommendations for approval by the United Nations General Assembly. It is composed of 33 members; 11 members represent Governing Bodies, 11 members appointed by the chief administrative officers of the member organizations, and 11 members elected by participants in service. In addition, there are 4 representatives of retirees on the Pension Board.

What is the purpose of the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund?

As an independent inter-agency entity, the Fund operates under its own Regulations as approved by the General Assembly and, in accordance with its governance structure, is administered by the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Board, which currently consists of 33 members, representing the 23 member organizations. Information of the Fund can be found at https://www.unjspf.org.

What benefits are provided by the Pension Fund?

The Fund provides the following types of benefits:

- Retirement benefit (article 28)
- Early retirement benefit (article 29)
- Deferred retirement benefit (article 30)
- Withdrawal settlement (article 31)
- Disability benefit (article 33)
- Widow's/widower's benefit (articles 34, 35)
- Divorced surviving spouse's benefit (article 35 bis)
- Spouses' married after separation benefit (article 35 ter)
- Child's benefit (article 36)
- Secondary dependant's benefit (article 37)
- Residual settlement (article 38)

What is the United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS)?

On 23 December 2004, as part of a broad review of security, the General Assembly, in its Resolution 59/276, approved the establishment of the Department of Safety and Security. This new organization includes a number of security offices throughout the United Nations including the former UNSECOORD, the Safety and Security Services

(SSS) in New York, and all offices away from headquarters, and the civilian security component for the Department of Peace-Keeping Operations. On 13 January 2005, the Secretary General appointed Mr. David Veness to Head the Department of Safety and Security at the Under-Secretary-General level.

While the primary responsibility for the safety and security of UN and humanitarian aid workers rests with the host government, UNDSS contributes to creating a secure environment for the humanitarian community by:

- Acting as the UN's primary liaison with the Government of the duty station on staff safety and security matters;
- Managing the UN's staff safety and security system, including preparing security and contingency plans and coordinating staff safety programmes including the Warden system;
- Supervising the various organisations that provide armed static and mobile security escort services;
- Providing personalised security training for UN staff and partners;
- Conducting security, threat and risk assessments and vulnerability reviews;
- Providing security briefings and specialised security advice to the UN and humanitarian aid communities;
- Coordinating medical evacuation arrangements and facilitating first-aid training and stress counselling;
- Organising security escorts for assessments, programme implementation, monitoring and special missions and visits;
- Providing transport coordination services;
- Providing incident analysis and database management; and
- Managing the UN's radio communications network.

What is the Fifth Committee of the United Nations General Assembly?

Article 17 of the Charter of the United Nations provides that "The General Assembly shall consider and approve the budget of the Organization; that the expenses of the Organization shall be borne by the Members as apportioned by the General Assembly; and that the General Assembly shall consider and approve any financial and budgetary arrangements with specialized agencies referred to in Article 57 and shall examine the administrative budgets of such specialized agencies with a view to making recommendations to the agencies concerned".

The Fifth Committee (Administrative and Budgetary Questions), as reaffirmed by General Assembly resolution 45/248 B, Sect. VI, is the appropriate Main Committee of the General Assembly entrusted with responsibilities for administration and budgetary matters.

Due to the increased workload of the Fifth Committee during the past years, it has now become the standard practice that the Committee meets, not only during the main part of the General Assembly (September to December) but during resumed sessions, in March and in May of a given year.

During the main part of the session, the Fifth Committee considers issues that require the approval of the General Assembly for funding by the end of the year. The resumed session held in March deals with issues that were not completed during the main part of the session. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 49/233 of 23 December 1994, the Committee considers, at a resumed session in May each year, items relating to the financing of peacekeeping operations. Subject to the urgency of the matter, the Fifth Committee may, at any time, consider the financing of a peacekeeping mission authorized by the Security Council, at any of its sessions.

The Fifth Committee considers the annual report of the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) to the UN General Assembly, which has the final say on the recommendations made by the Commission on the terms and conditions of service of UN system staff.

XIII. FICSA

What is the Federation of International Civil Servants' Associations (FICSA)?

Founded in Paris in 1952, FICSA is a federated group of 29 staff associations/unions from organizations belonging to the United Nations common system. Seventeen staff associations/unions outside the common system have associate status. Fifteen staff associations/unions are consultative members and 23 Federations of United Nations Staff Associations (FUNSA) are observers. The diversity of membership ensures that all staff in the field and at headquarters duty stations have the opportunity to exchange views and information about conditions of service; seek the Federation's assistance and support when difficulties arise; and organize collective action.

What are the aims of FICSA?

FICSA fosters the development of the international civil service in accordance with the principles set forth in the United Nations Charter and the constitutions of the specialized agencies. The Federation:

- Defends staff rights
- Ensures that equitable conditions of service for all common system staff are maintained at a level which will ensure the recruitment and retention of the most qualified people
- Contributes to building a positive image of the international civil service.

What are the FICSA Council and its Officers?

A Council of member association/union representatives meets annually to define the Federation's policy. Each year the Council elects an Executive Committee, consisting of a President, General Secretary, Treasurer, four members and four regional representatives who are responsible for implementing FICSA policies.

The Executive Committee draws up the annual programme of work, based on the decisions and recommendations adopted by Council. Standing committees specialize in General Service Questions, Professional Salaries and Allowances, Conditions of

Service in the Field, Social Security/Occupational Health and Safety, Human Resources Management, Staff/Management Relations and Legal Questions.

The Secretariat, housed on the UN premises in Geneva has four staff members including an Information Officer.

What can FICSA do to assist its members?

FICSA's annual and ongoing programmes of work include the following activities:

- Representing the interests of international civil servants in interagency bodies and legislative organs of the common system
- Coordinating activities at the local level and exchanging information on conditions of service
- Informing all staff on issues affecting their conditions of service
- Organizing seminars, workshops and working groups on specific aspects of conditions of service
- Advising member associations/unions on staff-management relations
- Producing position papers on the technical aspects of conditions of service
- Coordinating industrial action
- Supporting the use of the appeal process (internal appeals and Administrative Tribunals) in cases of non-observance of terms of appointment
- Formulating strategies to prevent violations of rights
- Participating in cost-of-living surveys that determine post adjustment and salary scales
- Advocating staff positions with Member States representatives
- Providing guidelines on how staff associations should deal with organizational reform.

What are recent achievements of FICSA?

FICSA's actions have helped staff to inter alia:

- Enhance reviews of the internal system of justice and the appeals process
- Improve security in all duty stations, especially for all staff at high-risk duty stations
- Protect the staff/management consultative process
- Preserve staff rights when organizations reform and re-profile
- Enhance the voice of staff in interagency bodies
- Obtain the release of detained staff and provide assistance to their family members
- Change the rules governing contractual arrangements, access to personal files, the definition of dependency
- Successfully challenge proposed cuts in pensions and salaries and secure a more equitable adjustment for pension beneficiaries

- Use legal recourse proceedings to challenge reduction and freeze of pensions
- Improve the content of cost-of-living questionnaires
- Obtain increases in allowances and benefits, e.g., children's allowance, installation grant, hazard pay
- Eliminate deductions from base salary (negative post adjustment multipliers)
- Improve the hardship and mobility scheme
- Extend the rental subsidy scheme to field duty stations
- Provide leave for parents in cases of child adoption
- Secure periodic upward adjustments in the amount of education grant.

XIV. What terms, related to salaries, allowances, pensions and human resources, are most commonly used in the UN system

Actuarial bases

The assumptions (e.g., on future mortality rates, number of contributors, number of retirees, return on investment) made by the actuaries on which the rate of contributions and the level of pension are based.

Actuarial imbalance

Projected amount of shortfall of the Pension Fund, expressed as a percentage of pensionable remuneration (PR). This projection is established according to a set of assumptions made by the actuaries.

Actuarial valuation

An estimation of the worth of the Pension Fund. This is performed by a consulting actuary along with a committee of five independent actuaries, appointed by the UN Secretary-General.

Appeal

To challenge a decision or action taken by, usually, an administrative unit or statutory body.

Base/floor salary scale

For the Professional and higher categories of staff, a universally applicable salary scale is used in conjunction with the post adjustment system. The minimum net amounts received by staff members around the world are those given in this scale. The scale is the basis for the calculation of post adjustment and the majority of separation benefits.

Benchmark

A criterion or point of reference. For General Service salary surveys, the term is used for representative jobs in the General Service category selected for comparison with similar jobs outside the UN system to determine local salary scales.

Beneficiary

Any person entitled to receive benefits under the Regulations of the UN Joint Staff Pension Fund.

Bias

Generally, an effect which deprives a statistical result of representativeness by systematically distorting it, as distinct from a random error which may distort on any one occasion but balances out on the average.

Broadbanding

A method of providing greater flexibility to reward individual performance and contribution. The term describes the action of combining and replacing several classification levels by a single, broader classification level (called a "band"). A broadbanded system is characterized by a limited number of wider bands or ranges and a bigger salary overlap between bands. Under the pay and benefits reform, the test of broadbanding in the pilot study is limited to the banding of salary levels.

Common system

A system of common arrangements resulting from agreements between the United Nations and its specialized agencies to apply as far as is practicable and/or desirable the same system of pay and benefits to avoid competition between organizations.

Comparator

Salaries and other conditions of employment of staff in the Professional and higher categories are determined in accordance with the Noblemaire principle by reference to those applicable in the civil service of the country with the highest pay levels. The United States federal civil service has been used as the comparator since the inception of the United Nations.

Competencies

A combination of skills, attributes and behaviours that are directly related to successful performance on the job. Core competencies are the skills, attributes and behaviours that are considered important for all staff of an organization, regardless of their function or level. For specific occupations, core competencies are supplemented by functional competencies related to respective areas of work.

Competency-related pay

A generic concept of paying employees for the development and application of essential skills, behaviours and actions which support high levels of individual, team and organizational performance.

Consolidation of post adjustment

The base/floor salary scale for the Professional and higher categories is adjusted periodically to reflect increases in the comparator salary scale. This upward adjustment is made by taking a fixed amount of post adjustment and incorporating or "consolidating" it into the base/floor salary scale. If the scale is increased by consolidating 5 per cent of post adjustment, the post adjustment classifications at all duty stations are then reduced by 5 per cent, thus ensuring, generally, no losses or gains to staff.

Consumer price index (CPI)

An index indicating the degree of change in the cost of a selected package of consumer goods in a duty station or country, as a percentage, against a base, established at a given survey period.

Cost-of-living differential

In net remuneration margin calculations, the remuneration of United Nations officials from the Professional and higher categories in New York is compared with their counterparts in the comparator service in Washington, D.C. As part of that comparison, the difference in cost of living between New York and Washington is applied to the comparator salaries to determine their "real value" in New York. The cost-of-living differential between New York and Washington is also taken into account in comparing pensionable remuneration amounts applicable to the two groups of staff mentioned above.

Dependency allowance

An allowance paid for a spouse, a child under the age of 21 or a disabled child of any age, provided that they depend on the staff member for their primary support, subject to meeting specified conditions.

Dependency rate salaries

Net salaries determined for staff with a primary dependant.

Dual track system (Two-track adjustment system)

A pension adjustment system applied to beneficiaries who retire in countries other than the United States. The system involves keeping a record of two amounts for each beneficiary: (a) one amount in $US, which is adjusted periodically to reflect changes in the United States consumer price index (US-CPI) and (b) the other amount in local currency, which is adjusted periodically to reflect changes in the CPI in a beneficiary's country of residence. Subject to certain limitations, the beneficiary is paid the higher of the two amounts.

Employment cost index (ECI)

Under the Federal Employees' Pay Comparability Act (FEPCA) (see below), a wage index that measures the percentage change in the average non-federal sector payroll costs between two points in time is calculated. The index, known as ECI, is based on the measurement of payroll costs across the United States. ECI is used as the basis for an across-the-board adjustment to salaries of United States federal civil service employees. Under FEPCA, United States federal civil servants can also receive a locality-based adjustment.

Exchange rate

The rate at which one currency is converted into another; an operational exchange rate is one that is applied by the organization to one currency to determine its equivalent in another currency.

Expatriate entitlements

Entitlements for staff serving outside their own country (mobility and hardship allowances, hazard pay, education grant, repatriation grant, home leave travel and removal and installation expenses).

Federal Employees' Pay Comparability Act (FEPCA)

The Federal Employees' Pay Comparability Act (FEPCA) (1990), passed by the United States Congress, whereby the pay of federal civil service employees would be brought to within 5 per cent of non- federal-sector comparator pay over a period of time.

Final average remuneration (FAR)

The average of the thirty-six months of highest pensionable remuneration during the last five years of contributory service.

Flemming principle

The principle according to which the salaries of locally recruited staff are determined, initially promulgated in 1949 by the Committee of Experts on Salary, Allowances and Leave Systems (the Flemming Committee). "Salaries and wages for locally engaged staff should be fixed and paid in local currency and should be sufficiently high to recruit and retain staff of high quality and standing. This means that, generally speaking, a local salary and wage scale should be equivalent to the 'best' prevailing local rates."

General Schedule

A 15-grade salary scale in the United States federal civil service, currently the comparator, covering the majority of employees.

Grade equivalency study

A comparison of grading of Professional and higher category posts in the UN and the comparator civil service to ensure pay equity with the comparator in accordance with the Noblemaire principle. A comparison of UN system grades P-1 to D-2 with the corresponding grades in the comparator civil service is carried out once every five years. The results of these comparisons provide an indication of the comparator grades which are equivalent in terms of job content to a particular UN grade.

Gross salary

The amount of salary before the deduction of staff assessment.

"H" duty stations under the Headquarters mobility and hardship scheme

Headquarters locations and locations where there are no United Nations developmental or humanitarian activities, or locations that are in countries which are members of the European Union.

Headquarters locations

Headquarters of the organizations participating in the United Nations common system are: Geneva, London, Madrid, Montreal, New York, Paris, Rome and Vienna. While the Universal Postal Union is headquartered at Berne (Switzerland), post adjustment and General Service salaries at Geneva are currently used for Berne.

Highest paid civil service

Under the application of the Noblemaire principle, salaries of United Nations staff in the

Professional and higher categories are based on those applicable in the civil service of the country with the highest pay levels, currently the United States.

Housing allowance

Paid in the form of rental subsidy to a staff member in a duty station where the proportion of the individual's salary that is required to rent acceptable accommodation is greater than an agreed amount. The rental subsidy decreases over time, and ceases after an agreed number of years, generally seven years.

Housing comparisons

In the context of the post adjustment system, comparisons of average housing costs in New York, the base of the post adjustment system, and those of other duty stations. Regard is paid to the size and type of dwelling.

Housing prices

The rents paid in the local market for housing that meets the standards defined by inter-agency bodies, taking into account the varying durations of occupancy.

Housing weights

The portion of the family income spent on rent, utilities and other housing-related costs. Housing weights can be expressed as: (a) the percentage of total expenditure on rent and other housing costs; or (b) the average housing costs reported by staff, expressed as a percentage of the net base salary plus post adjustment of a staff member at P-4/VI with dependants.

Human resources management

A system of administrative procedures to ensure the optimal utilization of staff. The term represents the evolution of the concept of personnel administration, as it developed into a more holistic approach to the utilization of staff resources.

Income replacement ratio

The ratio of pension to average net salary received during the same three-year period used in the determination of the pension benefit.

Local recruitment

The practice of selecting staff from among candidates already deemed to be present at the duty station. The terms of service of locally recruited staff differ significantly from those of internationally recruited staff.

Locality-based pay

Under FEPCA (see above), the United States Government has established approximately 30 separate locality pay areas. The locality-pay provision of FEPCA is based on average salary levels prevailing in the local labour market. For federal civil servants in a given locality, FEPCA provides for the payment of an ECI-based increase plus a locality-pay adjustment, if appropriate, for the period 1994-2002, with a view to ensuring that federal pay is brought to within 5 per cent of the non-federal pay for the locality.

Longevity steps

Additional steps beyond the established salary scale used to reward long service in grade.

Margin

The amount by which the salaries of staff in the Professional and higher categories exceed those of the comparator civil service to compensate for expatriation and other constraints associated with service in an international organization.

Margin range

A percentage range within which the salaries of staff in the Professional and higher categories are allowed to exceed those of the comparator.

Market prices

Rents paid in the local market for housing leased for one year or more suring the preceding six months and meeting defined standards.

Mobility and hardship allowances

Non-pensionable allowances designed to encourage mobility between duty stations and to compensate for service at difficult locations.

Multiplier points

The number of multiplier points essentially represents the extent of the cost of living differential between a given duty station and the base of the post adjustment system (New York). The annual amount of post adjustment payable is calculated by multiplying 1% of base salary by the number of points.

National Programme Officer (NPO)/National Officer

Staff recruited from within the country in which a programme is located in order to ensure continuity and the access by nationals to additional technical skills

Net remuneration margin

The Commission regularly carries out comparisons of the net remuneration of the United Nations staff in grades P-1 to D-2 in New York with that of the United States federal civil service employees in comparable positions in Washington, D.C. The average percentage difference in the remuneration of the two civil services, adjusted for the cost-of-living differential between New York and Washington, is the net remuneration margin.

Noblemaire principle

The basis used for the determination of conditions of service of staff in the Professional and higher categories. Under the application of the principle, salaries of the Professional category are determined by reference to those applicable in the civil service of the country with the highest pay levels.

Pension adjustment

Intended to ensure that a periodic benefit payable by the Pension Fund should never be allowed to fall below the "real" value of its US$ amount and to preserve its purchasing power as initially established in the currency of the recipient's country of residence. The pension adjustment system protects the purchasing power of pensions.

Pension Committee

Consists of an equal number of members elected by the governing body, appointed by the executive head or elected by the staff in an organization.

Pension scheme

A comprehensive retirement scheme that is intended to guarantee to participants reaching the age of retirement a benefit on which they may support themselves under conditions not too markedly different from those enjoyed during the closing years of service. It also includes disability and survivors' benefits.

Pensionable remuneration

The amount used to determine contributions from the staff member and the organization to the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund. Pensionable remuneration amounts are also used for the determination of pension benefits of staff members upon retirement.

Performance management

The process of optimizing performance at the level of the individual, team, unit, department and agency and linking it to organizational objectives. In its broadest sense, effective performance management is dependent on the effective and successful management of policies and programmes, planning and budgetary processes, decision-making processes, organizational structure, work organization and labour-management relations and human resources.

Performance-related pay

A generic concept involving a financial or financially measurable reward linked directly to individual, team or organizational performance, in the form of either base pay or a cash bonus payment. Terms used to describe different types of performance-related pay may vary. They include:

Merit pay/performance-related pay/pay-for-performance/variable pay: these are tools tailored to relate individual base pay increases to individual results, usually through a performance appraisal scheme and a performance rating.

Lump-sum bonus: a non-recurring cash lump sum related to the results achieved by an individual, team and/or agency or to recognize an intensive effort over a specific time period. May be pensionable or non-pensionable.

Place-to-place comparisons

A place-to-place survey providing benchmark information for the calculation of post adjustment indices in each duty station. Place-to-place comparisons provide a

weighted average of relative levels of prices of selected items after taking into account the expenditure pattern of international staff.

Post adjustment

An element used to adjust the salaries of staff in the Professional category, which is added to the base salary, to ensure the equivalence of purchasing power between duty stations. Post adjustment fluctuates according to the local cost of living compared with that in New York and the value of the local currency vis-à-vis the US dollar.

Post adjustment index

Measurement of the living costs of international staff members in the Professional and higher categories posted at a given location, compared with such costs in New York at a specific date.

Quota system

Staffing allocation applied to internationally-recruited staff in the Professional category to ensure that nationals of all Member States are equitably represented in each UN system organization. A desirable range is established for each nationality by the executive head of each organization.

Random sample

In place-to-place surveys, a sample drawn so that the probability of selection of every element in the population is the same. In practice, the selection of samples often falls short of the ideal in that subjective selection is sometimes performed and bias thereby is introduced.

Rate of accumulation

The rate at which the standard annual retirement benefit, and other benefits derived from it, accumulates for every year of contributory service.

Remuneration

A total of net base salary, post adjustment (for staff in the Professional category) and allowances adjusted according to the duty station.

Rental subsidy scheme

Applies primarily to staff in the field or Professional and higher categories and is paid to a staff member whose rent exceeds the acceptable rent calculated in accordance with established criteria.

Representation allowance

An allowance to cover the cost of hospitality offered by an official of an organization.

Single rate salaries

Net salaries determined for staff without a primary dependant.

Staff assessment

Salaries of United Nations staff from all categories are expressed in gross and net terms, the difference between the two being the staff assessment. Staff assessment is a form of taxation, internal to the United Nations, and is analogous to taxes on salaries applicable in most countries.

Strategic bonuses

Recruitment, retention or relocation bonuses awarded to select staff or groups of staff, which are designed to attract potential staff, retain staff in service and relocate staff who, in the absence of such bonuses, could not be recruited, retained or relocated.

Supplementary payments

The practice by several governments of paying nationals of their countries who are UN system staff members an amount of money to supplement their salary, often in the form of a termination emolument or gratuity. Such practice is against the rules of the common system and the UN Charter.

Survey of best prevailing conditions

A survey of the conditions of employment currently offered by the best employers in an area to determine the salaries of staff in the General Service category in accordance with the Flemming principle.

Staff development

The maintenance and updating of competencies, skills and knowledge of staff to ensure the effective functioning of an organization.

Tax abatement

In the context of dependency allowances, tax credit or relief provided to taxpayers who are responsible for the financial support of dependants (spouse, children, parents, etc.) in the tax systems of a number of countries.

Tax Equalization Fund

A fund maintained by, for example, the United Nations, that is used for reimbursing national taxes levied on United Nations income for some staff members.

Tripartite Working Group

A working group composed of representatives of staff, administrations and the governing body, ICSC or Member States.

Walsh index

A multilateral index of a comparison of prices between several duty stations. One duty station is selected as a base. The formula is a geometric average of price ratios at each duty station and the base, weighted by the average weights of all duty stations involved in the exercise.

FICSA

Federation of International
Civil Servants' Associations

Palais des Nations
Office VB 03/04
CH-1211 Geneva 10
Switzerland

Tel.: (41-22) 917 31 50
(41-22) 917 06 60
Email: ficsa@un.org

www.FICSA.org

18-06105E