



## COMMUNICATION

### *Stay informed, stay aligned – Compensation Package update*

**28/24**

**Geneva  
6 November 2024**

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To: FICSA members – Please distribute widely to your affiliated staff members in your organization

From: Wadzanai Garwe, President

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Dear colleagues,

We are writing to update you on FICSA's recent efforts to safeguard and improve the UN compensation package. The President, Wadzanai Garwe, and the Executive member for Compensation Issues, Simone Grego, have just returned from New York for the annual UN General Assembly (Fifth Committee) and other technical meetings, including on personal transitional allowance, hardship classifications and one-on-one meetings with member states.

[The 2024 ICSC Report](#) was the basis for discussions with member states. FICSA would like to reiterate that we are fighting to preserve the existing compensation package given the existing geopolitical and financial considerations of the Member States. Our motto remains to preserve and improve the existing compensation package, as seen from the [FICSA Statement to the Fifth Committee \(FICSA/Circular/1384\)](#).

Member States are scrutinizing every aspect of our compensation so we need to remain cognizant that we cannot predict the outcome of the review. The decision will be taken in 2026 at the UN General Assembly.

We have heard from you that some staff are hearing a lot of rumors, gossip, and hearsay about the review of the compensation package, which has led to panic and distress.

We are here to guide you. We encourage all staff to rely on official FICSA communications for updates, as rumors and hearsay can create unnecessary anxiety. We are presenting facts, not fears. Our arguments are built on clear, factual information to support the preservation and improvement of your benefits.

FICSA has kept the Heads of Delegations up to date through our quarterly meeting, followed by FICSA Communications, Circulars and Ask the FICSA Expert online sessions at any time there has been any development in the review of the compensation package. This was the main discussion item during the 77<sup>th</sup> FICSA Council and will be the same at the upcoming 78<sup>th</sup> FICSA Council at UNESCO Paris in 2025.

In the meantime, we would like to provide the facts below as our argument to preserve and improve the package that you can share with your constituents.

We request that you, as members of FICSA, kindly stand and reiterate the points provided below with all staff so that the member states and management are clear about the business case we are making, and so we can “sing from the same playbook”.

- FICSA represents about 40,000 staff of the United Nations Common System, almost one-third, or 31%, of the overall workforce of the UN (excluding non-staff workforce or project staff). We represent mainly, but not limited to, the UN's specialized agencies. Approximately 58% of the staff we represent are based in the field.
- FICSA strongly believe that the compensation package is fit for purpose, in line with the 2021 assessment by the ICSC ([paragraph 91 to 95 of ICSC Annual Report for 2021 - A/76/30](#)). FICSA is open to adjustments aimed at modernizing, harmonizing, clarifying, and simplifying the overall package if these are not used for cuts of allowances and benefits. FICSA is advocating for improvements in the system especially in ensuring staff occupational health and safety, mental health and wellbeing, disability inclusion, and diversity, equity and inclusion strategies are rolled out and implemented.
- FICSA generally aligns endorsements with [the G77 and Africa statements at the 5th committee](#) and supports the adoption of cumulative ICSC recommendations for 2023 and 2024.
- The 2016 review of the compensation package brought 320 million USD in savings ([paragraph 253 of the ICSC Annual Report for 2024](#)):
  - *“253. The Commission noted that significant changes had been made to the compensation package during the previous comprehensive review that had concluded in 2015, which had resulted in considerable savings that were estimated by the secretariat at around \$320 million since 2017...”*
- In addition, there are substantial savings from the lack of rebasing of the child allowance for 12 years. As staff, we note that very little of the savings, if at all, was re-invested in the improvement of the compensation package, contrary to what was promised in the 2016 review.
- The recent Global Staff Survey of the compensation package highlighted several points, but one is striking - only 36 percent of respondents felt their salary was competitive, even though the United Nations common system pay was set in reference to the highest paid national civil service ([paragraph 80 of the ICSC Annual Report for 2024](#)).
- Moreover, an analysis done by ICSC in 2020 on World Bank and OECD remuneration levels highlighted that they both have around 30% better salaries compared with the UN ([paragraph 72.\(a\) of the ICSC Annual Report for 2020](#)): “(a) According to the reference data from the World Bank and OECD, the remuneration levels of those organizations were, respectively, 36.6 and 28.2 per cent ahead of that of the United Nations common system;”
- This means that any further cut will be seen as unfair by the staff and will, for sure, have an impact on retention and performance. There is a positive link between the perception of fairness of compensation package and engagement. Let’s not forget that Staff is working way and above the hours that their respective contracts foresee (see UN survey 2022 on health) and that any further erosion of the package will impact this.

- FICSA also believes that staff at large, and Member States are often not fully informed about the various components of the overall package as well as the various methodologies and rationale behind each. FICSA is doing a lot to ensure that staff has training in conducting local salary and cost of living surveys to participate knowledgeably and fully and contribute towards ensuring the methodologies are applied, and the results are assessed based on the outcomes.
- There is much room for improvement around the implementation, interpretation, and application of the benefits at the level of each common-system organization's policies, as well as related rules and regulations. Staff concerns about the compensation package are often more related to individual organizations' implementation processes, HR policies and practices. FICSA takes the opportunity to reiterate our position that the ways of working of the organizations should not be divorced from any assessment of the entire compensation package.
- FICSA also advocates that the Member States assess the overall system-wide budget. Staff are requesting that member states assess the efficiencies within the overall system and not just staff compensation. The system needs to come together to ensure overall efficiency even in simple issues such as the staff UN digital identity. As staff of another UN agency, it is still almost impossible to access information, tools and other material developed by other UN organizations internally that can be upscaled and used by other agencies. Even using Microsoft Teams results in barriers for staff from different UN entities. This is a simple fix and yet many person hours are spent on such superfluous connections to ensure that UN entities can speak to each other.

The FICSA Executive Committee Members will meet and communicate with your heads of delegation should the situation evolve. The next upcoming Heads of Delegations meeting will take place on 10<sup>th</sup> of December, followed by one during the last week of January 2025 prior to the 78<sup>th</sup> FICSA Council.

If you have any concerns, kindly address them to your staff association. If they do not know the answer, they will address them to FICSA.

Kindly keep abreast of the work we do on [LinkedIn](#) and [Facebook](#) to follow the discussions.

Please watch our expert sessions on our website about '[Ask the FICSA Expert](#)' to gain a deeper understanding of the various aspects of the compensation package. We recently had one on dependency benefits.

We have to make the business case to the member states as our employers. We ask that you provide your staff associations with any positive and negative experiences regarding the compensation package, which we will anonymize and share in the technical working groups so we can make the case.

Let us come together and make the case.

We are stronger together.

In solidarity,  
FICSA Executive Committee Members

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