



COMMUNICATION 30/19

“#EqualPay4UNstaff” Campaign

To: Chairs, Member Associations/Unions
Members of the Executive Committee
Chairs, Members with Associate Status
Chairs, Associations with Consultative Status
Presidents, Federations with Observer Status
Chairs and Vice-Chairs of Standing Committees

Geneva, 13 November 2019

From: Evelyn Kortum, General Secretary

Dear Colleagues,

Some of you may have received an email relative to the current so-called “#EqualPay4UNstaff” campaign being conducted by the UN Geneva Staff Coordinating Council.

Based on the communications which we have seen on this subject, we note that it is apparently not a CCISUA campaign but, instead, is mainly an initiative from the UN Geneva Staff Coordinating Council.

While FICSA member staff associations/unions are of course free to decide whether or not their membership at large could participate in the campaign, FICSA would like to express its observations and concerns as a staff federation representing staff of all categories and on a global basis.

The campaign is clearly designed to request the UN Secretary-General and the UN General Assembly (GA) to also apply the ILO Administrative Tribunal (ILOAT) judgments, relative to the earlier-filed pay cut appeals in Geneva, to UN Secretariat staff (including the UN’s funds and programmes) in the Professional and higher categories based in Geneva, without waiting for a judgment from the UN Dispute Tribunal (UNDT) which has legal dispute jurisdiction over the UN Secretariat and its staff for such appeals.

Whilst FICSA entirely supports the principle of equal pay for equal work, such a principle should be applied not only to one category of staff in one duty station but to all categories of staff in all duty stations. This includes staff in the Professional and higher categories based in Rome and Madrid who were also adversely affected by the implementation of the related International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) decisions and could potentially gain from the ILOAT judgments. FICSA has seen no evidence that this campaign is globally coordinated to support other large groups of staff in other duty stations who also deserve equal support.

Furthermore, FICSA is aware that some Member States are linking their current discussions on this matter in the GA with the part of the ICSC's annual report for the year 2019 which draws "the attention of the Assembly to the challenge of having two concurrent independent administrative tribunals among the organizations of the United Nations common system." In other words, FICSA is aware that the stronger UN Secretariat Professional category staff representatives in Geneva insist on not waiting for a UNDT judgment on their related appeals, the stronger some Member States will insist, in current discussions at the GA, that there should be only one appellate Tribunal, i.e. the UN Appeals Tribunal (UNAT) to address disputes related to compensation, benefits and allowances.

By supporting the above-referenced campaign, staff of the specialized Agencies who are currently under the jurisdiction of the ILOAT could jeopardize their Organization's recognition of the ILOAT jurisdiction and unknowingly contribute to their Organizations leaving the ILOAT to move to the UNAT which, as has already been demonstrated previously, is significantly more favorable to the Administrations.

FICSA is of the view that it would be much more useful if our staff representative colleagues from the UN Secretariat in Geneva were to focus on following up with their management on reforming the UNDT and, in particular, the UNAT in the interest of all staff and the organizations.

The FICSA Executive Committee would like to assure its membership that it is doing its utmost to defend and protect the rights of staff of all categories in all duty stations. During his recent meetings with the members of the UN's Fifth Committee, the FICSA President stated that any call from the legislative for one tribunal only in the common system could not only be (rightly or wrongly) perceived as retaliation against ILOAT due to the legislative's disagreement with the ILOAT judgment, but also be perceived as undue political pressure on the UNDT / AT that have not yet ruled, given that there would be an implicit expressed expectation that those tribunals should rule differently.

We hope that you find this information helpful. Please let us know should you have any further questions.

Best regards,

FICSA Executive Committee