



# COMMUNICATION 34/19

## Information on HQ/FICSA Event held on 6 November 2019

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, 6 December 2019

From: Evelyn Kortum, General Secretary

Dear colleagues,

First of all, we are immensely happy to inform you that our Information Officer, Irwan, is officially on board since 2 December. The ways our organizations function are sometimes long with curves in the road, but we eventually succeeded. Irwan will be working with us from his duty station in Kuala Lumpur, however given modern technology this is not creating any barrier to our effective collaboration.

Secondly, we would like to share some summaries of presentations and discussions recently held at the FICSA secretariat offices in Geneva. These include the progress made in implementing phase one of the functional review recommendations and subsequent Council decisions, update on FICSA's advocacy activities with the Fifth Committee/UN General Assembly, update on the review of the operational rules relative to post adjustment, and an update on the review of the GS salary survey methodology.

The meeting was attended by representatives from ITU, UNAIDS, WHO, WMO and WTO.



### **Update on Functional Review items (15.3 – Economical Use of Resources; 20.1 – Administrative Assistant)**

**Presenter: Irwan Mohd Razali, Information Officer**

### **Budget proposals for the year 2020**

**Chapter One, FICSA Representation<sup>1</sup>** : The FICSA ExCom reduced costs from CHF 95,400 to 90,000 by FICSA's virtual presence, for example, at the 66<sup>th</sup> Pension Board Meeting. The ExCom will continue to look for ways to reduce costs whenever it is sensible to do so without compromising the quality of services provided.

<sup>1</sup> based on approved budget for 2019

**Chapter Two, FICSA ExCom:** The cost of CHF37,000 for the annual FICSA Council will remain stable. In future, the ExCom might reconsider the necessity of a French- English interpreter as this is a significant cost.

**Chapter Three, FICSA Services:** It is proposed that FICSA will remain the coordinator of the workshops. However, member associations/unions which request workshops will bear the responsibility and cost. In return, any benefits or fees of the workshop will go directly to the organizing member association/union, and not to FICSA as is currently the case. Therefore, it will no longer be necessary to include an amount of CHF 50,000 in FICSA's annual budget.

**Chapter Four, FICSA Administration:** This Chapter will experience substantial reduction of about CHF200,000, the reason being that the Administrative Assistant position has been frozen pending renewed assessment of the tasks. Existing staff who take on more responsibilities will be compensated accordingly.

FICSA's guiding principles for determining the new budget proposal for the year 2020 was that the quality of FICSA's services not be affected negatively by budget reductions. Members supported this principle that quality should not be negatively affected as a result of reductions in budget.

Nevertheless, the membership has been requesting that their FICSA dues be lowered so the ExCom conducted its review of the FICSA budget under the above-mentioned guiding principle while being fully cognizant of the fine balancing act and boundaries within which its members needed to conduct this exercise. It is recalled that the 72<sup>nd</sup> FICSA Council had also requested the ExCom to conduct cost comparisons relative to the possibility of relocating the FICSA secretariat to a lower-cost duty station. The cost comparison will be presented to the 73<sup>rd</sup> FICSA Council. However, the draft budget which the FICSA ExCom will present to Council is based on the FICSA secretariat still being in Geneva since Council has not, at the time of preparing this draft budget, taken any decision relative to the location of the FICSA secretariat.

Overall, the ExCom will propose a draft 2020 budget which reflects a decrease in foreseen expenditures by a total of approximately 40%, which is a considerably reduced FICSA budget. The proposed 2020 budget will be submitted to the 73<sup>rd</sup> FICSA Council for consideration and decision.

## UPDATE ON FICSA'S ADVOCACY ACTIVITIES AT THE FIFTH COMMITTEE/UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

**Presenter: Brett Fitzgerald, FICSA President**



Brett explained, for the benefit of newcomers, that the ICSC and the UN Pension Board report directly to the UN General Assembly (GA).

In accordance with Articles 10 and 11 of the ICSC Statutes, the Commission can only recommend, to the GA, certain changes to staff's employment conditions whereas, for some other employment conditions, the ICSC can itself take decisions and then report thereon to the GA. This year the ICSC has either recommended to the GA, or decided itself, the following: It recommended a 1.21% adjustment to the base/floor salary scale

to be implemented by increasing the base salary and commensurately decreasing post adjustment multiplier points, resulting in no change in net take-home pay; the ICSC reported to the GA that it estimates a margin of 113.4 for the calendar year 2019; in respect of the education grant it recommended to the GA a revised sliding reimbursement scale and a boarding lump sum increase in the amount of \$5,300 from the academic year in progress on 1 January 2020; it decided on an increase

in hardship allowance of 2% effective 1 January 2020; and it proposed an increase associated with the mobility incentive. FICSA delivered a statement to the Fifth Committee when it took up its agenda item 142 entitled “UN common system” (see FICSA/CIRC/133). In respect of this agenda item, Brett reported that the Fifth Committee members were entirely focused on the July 2019 ILOAT judgments relative to the Geneva-based pay cut appeals. In FICSA’s statement as well as informal meetings and discussions with Fifth Committee delegates, Brett stressed the importance that Member States respect the Rule of Law and continue to ensure the independence and separation of powers between the legislative (the GA and the ICSC) and the judiciary (the Tribunals). Fifth Committee delegates all expressed their desire to maintain the UN Common System.

Brett also informed the meeting participants that at least one Member State was trying to gain support in its call for the existence of only one Tribunal in the UN common system to decide on cases related to the implementation, by Organizations, of ICSC decisions. Brett added that in his advocacy activities with delegates of the Fifth Committee he had mentioned that such an initiative could be interpreted as retaliation against the ILOAT and that, in any case, when an organization decides to recognize the jurisdiction of a specific Tribunal it is a decision to be taken only by that individual Organization. As such, it would be inappropriate for the UN GA to attempt to decide, at the place of the Governing Bodies of each and every individual organization, the Tribunal which such organizations should be a member of.

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### **Update on the Operational Rules of Post Adjustment**

**Presenter: Irwan Mohd Razali, FICSA Information Officer**

Irwan briefed the members of the Controlled Convergence Mechanism (CCM) recently proposed by the ICSC, which would, if agreed to, replace the current Post Adjustment Operational Rules.

The CCM has a series of fixed parameters that will determine how fast or slow the Post Adjustment would increase or decrease in a duty station when there is a change.

Due to time constraints, Irwan was not able to dive into the specificities. However, he highlighted that adopting the CCM would mean that the current pay protection mechanism, such as gap closure measure and personal transition allowance, would be replaced by the CCM. Further study and analysis are required to ensure that staff would not be adversely impacted in the future.

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### **UPDATE ON THE REVIEW OF THE GS SALARY SURVEY METHODOLOGY**

**Presenter: Brett Fitzgerald, FICSA President**

Brett informed that the ICSC had established a Working Group (WG) to review the General Service (GS) salary survey methodology. The Working Group has met twice and subsequently submitted a status report to the Commission. Some members of the Commission would like to do away with the ICSC-conducted salary surveys as they currently exist (interviewing comparator local best-paying employers and match their jobs and corresponding salaries with those of the UN in that specific duty station). There is a push from some quarters to replace this type of salary survey with pay data which would be purchased from private vendors. Brett stressed that the ICSC had already examined this idea during an earlier review of the methodology, and it ended up being discarded by the Commission. The pay data available from such external vendors is not sufficiently reliable for purposes of establishing local salaries for international civil servants in accordance with the Fleming Principle. Such external vendors usually have pay data taken from specific sectors of the market, not all sectors which raises questions about the validity of the data and its conformity with the methodology and the Fleming Principle.

Nonetheless, some members of the Commission are suggesting that this be done on a pilot basis simultaneously with a classical ICSC-conducted local salary survey in order to ascertain the difference in results obtained from the two different approaches.

The timeline for implementation of this new methodology is not yet defined. A third meeting of the WG will be held one week prior to the February 2020 FICSA Council. There will be an excellent opportunity for FICSA members to ask questions to the ICSC in respect of this matter when the ICSC provides a briefing on the methodology and its current review during the Pre-Council session scheduled for all day Saturday, 8 February 2020.

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