

DRAFT REPORT OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON GENERAL SERVICE QUESTIONS

Introduction

1. The Standing Committee (SC – see Appendix 1 for participants) met on 7 and 8 January 2021 to address its agenda, and elected a Rapporteur.

Report on decisions adopted during the 73rd FICSA Council

2. The Chair reported on the six decisions made by the previous Council. As to [decisions 19 and 20](#), FICSA representatives attended the ICSC session in October 2020, and the report of the working group on the review of the methodologies for conducting General Service (GS) salary surveys was finalized. Pilot surveys and all related action had been suspended owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, however.

3. As to [decisions 21 and 22](#), a repository of all relevant materials for members of local salary survey committees (LSSCs) was made available on the GSQ page of the FICSA website, so that training materials could be updated when the review of the methodologies was finalized.

4. As for decisions [23](#) and [24](#), FICSA had commissioned Professor Aditya Jain, University of Nottingham, United Kingdom, to study the impact of digitalization and artificial intelligence (AI) as causes and enablers of organizational change and their implications for the international civil service, and presented the results to SC. The LSSC training for East Africa in Arusha, Tanzania, had been cancelled, owing to the pandemic.

Report of the Permanent Technical Committee for General Service Questions (PTC/GSQ)

5. The report of the PTC/GSQ comprises Appendix 2. SC adopted the following PTC/GSQ recommendations.

Recommendations

6. SC recommended that the FICSA ExCom should pursue the discontinuation of the use of dual salary scales in case of negative result of the salary survey

7. SC recommended that the FICSA ExCom should continue monitoring the situation of salary surveys globally, should survey FICSA members to identify the duty stations lacking a mechanism for interim salary adjustments between surveys, and conduct research and provide technical assistance on putting forward proposals for establishing such interim adjustments.

8. Although all LSSC training had been suspended pending the finalization of the review of the methodologies, SC recommended that FICSA members should identify LSSC participants in their organizations and start their training well in advance, at least a year before the date of a salary survey, once the schedule has been made available.

9. SC recommended that, as soon as the methodology for salary surveys was finalized, FICSA should update its training materials and start organizing training sessions according to the new survey schedule.

Input for the joint sessions on remote work, agile contract modalities, and enabling technology

10. Presenting the results of his study, Professor Jain highlighted how digitalization was a primary driver of organizational change, bringing both opportunities and challenges. The many opportunities included work efficiency, cost-effectiveness, flexibility, accessibility, risk reduction, accurate hiring of staff, data processing, distribution of work, performance monitoring and appraisal, and facilitation of less hierarchical, more participative management practices, with a potential for adopting new models for collective bargaining.

11. The challenges identified included threats to job security and the potential increase of precarity; working conditions with increased workload, working time, and less autonomy, depending on how organizations made changes; and increased stress and negative effects on health, particularly mental health, well-being and work-life balance, with blurred boundaries between work and private life. Further, staff might not have the skills and competencies to use technologies; a timely response to the rate of technological change was critical. Increased monitoring and surveillance of employees could have a negative impact where implementation did not adhere to good standards and practices. Finally, digitalization typically helped the workers with more education and access to resources, which could further divide the workforce. Digitalization created a range of issues, including the needs:

- to balance flexibility with workers' autonomy and control over their work, which increased the importance of workers' participation and collective bargaining;
- to ensure social protection for independent workers;
- to protect workers' privacy while using algorithmic monitoring and surveillance;
- to ensure ethical hiring by addressing inherent biases and the participation of diverse and marginalized groups.

12. In the UN civil service, organizational performance needed to be balanced with the workforce's health, safety and well-being. There was a need to develop a multidisciplinary approach and holistic policy framework for digitalization, and codes of conduct and governance that adopted a lifelong perspective to working life with a strong focus on well-being.

13. In the EU, the European Social Partners, employers, trade unions and governments had signed the [Framework Agreement on Digitalization](#) in June 2020, which was based on a human-oriented approach. The Framework took account of four broad key areas: work content and skills; employment terms and conditions and work-life balance; work environment and health and safety; and work relations.

14. In the ensuing discussion, Professor Jain explained that he had based his study on global literature, and that areas with fast Internet connections would feel the greatest impact of changing technologies. Other implications for diversity would be related to the use of data, AI and built-in biases. It was vital for organizations to adopt policies and procedures to retrain and redeploy staff in different areas, whose jobs/functions will be lost and or diminished through digitalization.

15. The distinction was made between teleworking and remote work, and collective bargaining was essential to the conversation. The pandemic had forced organizations to use technologies for good or ill. It was important both to establish clear frameworks before introducing technology deemed beneficial and to prepare in advance to address negative implications. Organizations needed to invest in technology and provide training for staff in both the field and headquarters. Addressing all those issues was in the interest of all organizations, and that required clear commitment from senior management.

Recommendation

16. SC recommended that, in view of the impact on staff of digitalization and AI, the FICSA ExCom should, during discussions at high-level fora, advocate:

- **equitable access to technology for all staff across the UN system, irrespective of grade or location;**
- **a multidisciplinary approach to this issue by all relevant actors identified by ExCom.**

Nomination of SC officers and core group members

17. SC nominated Alberto Fernández (OPCW) as Chair and Silvia Mariangeloni (FAO/WFP-UGSS) and Eugenia Agostini as Vice-Chairs. (Pilar Vidal Estevez (PAHO/WHO) and Imed Zabaar (IAEA) were nominated as joint coordinators of PTC/GSQ.)

18. SC agreed to include all participants in its meetings as core group members.

Appendix 1. Participants

Chair	Alberto Fernández (OPCW)
Vice-Chair and Rapporteur	Silvia Mariangeloni (FAO/WFP-UGSS)
FICSA President	Tanya Quinn-Maguire (UNAIDS)
FICSA General Secretary	Evelyn Kortum (WHO/HQ)
FICSA ExCom members,	Veronique Allain (SCBD), Kay Miller (WHO/EURO), Pilar Vidal (PAHO/WHO), Imed Zabaar (IAEA)
Speaker	Aditya Jain, Associate Professor and Head of Department, Nottingham School, United Kingdom

Staff association/union

FAO/WFP-UGSS	Paola Franceschelli, Dina Franchi, Susan Murray
IAEA	Fernand Agboge, Eugenia Agostini, Balazs Zsigo
ICAO	Andrew Brown, Sanya Dehinde, Viera Seben
ILO/ITC	Cristina Pierini
IMO	Shereen Barry, Fola Odulana
OSCE	Roman Langthaler, Nizar Zaher
SCBD	Lisa Pedicelli
UNESCO	Elia Matias
UNFCCC	Mary Jean Abrazado, Ambretta Perrino
UNGSC	Laura Reynaldo
UNIDO	Cosimo Melpignano
UPU	Birahim Fall, Stephane Vuillemin
WHO/AFRO	Hamidou Bague
WHO/EURO	Nathalie Germain Julskov
WHO/GSC	Khalid Aizat
WHO/SEARO	Ritesh Singh
WHO/WPRO	Roxanne Divina, Modesto Beligan VI

Appendix 2. Report of the Permanent Technical Committee for General Service Questions

Introduction

1. The Permanent Technical Committee on General Service Questions (PTC GSQ – see Appendix 1 for participants) met on 6 January 2021 to address its agenda. It observed a minute of silence in memory of Franco di Pancrazio, FICSA trainer and resource person for many years. PTC GSQ adopted an agenda and elected Silvia Mariangeloni (FAO/WFP-UGSS) as Rapporteur.

Review of the General Service (GS) salary survey methodologies

2. The Chair and a FICSA resource person briefed attendees on the work of ICSC's Working Group on the review of the salary survey methodologies for GS staff and other locally recruited categories, which had been initiated in 2019.

3. The working group had held its third meeting in February 2020, just prior to the 73rd FICSA Council. Since then, not much had happened, although two task forces had met online. The review was expected to be finalized in 2021, even though a long list of items remained to be discussed. The review still focused on the possibility of using data from external vendors to replace the current methodology, in which the local salary survey committee (LSSC) surveyed a number of comparators. Simulations had been conducted using data provided by three vendors for 12 selected duty stations; the compared results showed significant variance. In addition, the working group planned to conduct pilot applications of external data implemented prior to the next round of conventional salary surveys in selected locations.

4. The working group had discussed the possibility of using transitional measures to address concerns about the use of dual scales resulting from negative salary surveys, which had led to significant changes in salaries. The ICSC Secretariat had proposed transitional measures aimed at a more gradual implementation of the survey results, where they were exceptionally higher or lower than certain thresholds. The working group rejected the proposal and recommended that the ICSC Secretariat continue to work on it.

5. Further, the working group had established a task force to make proposals on the categorization of duty stations by the number of employers/employees, for submission to the working group at its next meeting. At present, there were five categories, with category V including duty stations for which a reference check was held instead of a comprehensive survey of employers. The working group had discussed the experience with reference checks obtained through the use of external data for category-V duty stations.

6. Other issues addressed included reviewing the questionnaire, the role of the LSSC with a view to maintaining or strengthening it, and the quantification of benefits.

7. The working group would meet in the first quarter of 2021, and possibly again before ICSC's summer session, in order to draft a new salary-survey methodology for ICSC consideration and approval at its spring session in 2022.

Recommendation

8. PTC GSQ recommended that the Standing Committee on General Service Questions should request the FICSA ExCom to pursue the discontinuation of the use of dual salary scales in case of a negative result.

Schedule of salary surveys in 2021

9. The schedule of comprehensive salary surveys for 2021 had not been made available. A number of salary surveys under methodology II were still outstanding/pending.

Impact of COVID-19 on upcoming salary surveys

10. Discussion of the impact of COVID-19 on upcoming salary surveys gave great emphasis to the deterioration of economic and financial conditions, specifically the increase of the unemployment rate and the likelihood that several companies would shut down. Those circumstances would create unfavourable conditions for conducting salary surveys, and might provide a strong justification to support the use of external data. Further, COVID-19 restrictions might preclude physical interviews in the data-collection phase of surveys.

11. FICSA could assist LSSCs that lacked a mechanism to adjust salaries between surveys in identifying a reliable and reputable source of data to be used for the adjustment of salaries within the purview of the current methodology.

Recommendation

12. PTC GSQ recommended that the Standing Committee on General Service Questions should:

- (a) request the FICSA ExCom to continue monitoring the situation globally; and**
- (b) instruct the ExCom to survey FICSA members to identify those duty stations lacking a mechanism for interim salary adjustments between salary surveys, and to conduct research and provide technical assistance in putting forward proposals for establishing such adjustments.**

FICSA training material and resource persons

13. Considering that the methodology for salary surveys was under review, in accordance with Council's decision, no training had been held in 2020. Appendix 2 lists FICSA resource persons on GS salary-survey methodology for 2021: individuals conversant with the methodologies and conducting or undergoing training of trainers.

Recommendation

14. PTC GSQ recommended that the Standing Committee on General Service Questions should urge FICSA to allocate the necessary funds and give priority to updating its training material, as soon as ICSC approved a methodology; and then hold training sessions in duty stations according to the new schedule of salary surveys.

Appendix 2.1. Participants and PTC membership

Chair	Imed Zabaar (IAEA)
FICSA Resource Person	Mauro Pace
Rapporteur	Silvia Mariangeloni (FAO/WFP-UGSS)
FICSA President	Tanya Quinn-Maguire (UNAIDS)
FICSA General Secretary	Evelyn Kortum (WHO/HQ)
Member for Field Issues	Véronique Allain (SCBD)
FICSA Treasurer	Kay Miller (WHO/EURO)
FICSA Regional Representative for Africa	Anthony Ndinguri (ICAO)
Staff association/union	
FAO/WFP-UGSS	Paola Franceschelli, Susan Murray
ICAO	Andrew Brown
OSCE	Nizar Zaher
UNFCCC	Mary Jean Abrazado, Melita Kolundzic Stabile, Ambretta Perrino
UNGSC	Cosimo Melpignano
UPU	Birahim Fall
WHO/GSC	Aizat Khalid
Members with associate status	
CTBTO	Michelle Delinde
IOM	Berta Fernandez
ITER	Sophie Miras
OPCW	Alberto Fernandez

PTC membership 2020–2021

Organization	Name	Email address
FAO/WFP-UGSS	Silvia Mariangeloni	silvia.mariangeloni@wfp.org
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OPCW	Alberto Fernández	alberto.fernandez@opcw.org
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UNGSC	Cosimo Melpignano	melpignano@un.org
WHO/EURO	Kay Miller	millerk@who.int
WHO/GSC	Irwan Mohd-Razali	Mohdrazalii@who.int

Appendix 2.2. FICSA resource persons on GS salary-survey methodology 2021

Name	Working language	E-mail	Location (region)	Trainer (level)
Jeanne d’Arc Matuje Mukamwiza (non-HQ)	English/French	dArc.MatujeMukamwiza@fao.org	Africa	Intermediate
Varghese Joseph (HQ and non-HQ)	English/French	vjosephvarghese@gmail.com	Europe	Advanced
Edmond Mobio (HQ and non-HQ)	English/French	mobioed@gmail.com	Europe	Advanced
Mauro Pace (HQ and non-HQ)	English/French/ Spanish	Mauropace58@gmail.com	Europe	Advanced
Imed Zabaar (HQ)	English/French/ Arabic	i.zabaar@iaea.org	Europe	Advanced
Irwan Mohd Razali (non-HQ)	English	mohdrazalii@who.int	Asia	Intermediate
Pilar Vidal Estevez	English/Spanish	vidalpil@paho.org	Americas	Intermediate
Veronique Allain	English/French/Spanish	veronique.allain@cbd.int	Americas	Intermediate