

**DRAFT REPORT
OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL SECURITY/OCCUPATIONAL
HEALTH AND SAFETY**

Introduction

1. The Standing Committee on Social Security/Occupational Health and Safety (SC – see Appendix I for participants) met on 7 December 2020. It adopted an agenda and elected Andrew Brown (ICAO) as rapporteur.

Implementation of the Mental Health Strategy

2. The SC Chair and the FICSA President summarized recent developments. The 73rd FICSA Council had recommended that members keep abreast of tools to implement the Mental Health Strategy proposed by the Implementation Board and share any effective tools used in their organizations. Despite the current pandemic, the Mental Health Board had continued its work on a strategy and the Advisory Panel on Mental Health had started work on an awareness campaign on the reduction of stigma linked to mental ill health.

3. The issue of staff's mental health and well-being had been on FICSA's agenda for about five years. It started in response to concerns expressed by staff representatives, as well as SC members, who had observed a steady increase in the number of cases related to mental health and called for the UN to take a stand on this subject. That had led to the creation of a working group, with FICSA as a founding member, to devise the strategy. Consequently, the UN had developed the [*United Nations System Mental Health and Well-being Strategy: A healthy workforce for a better world.*](#)

4. Owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, all Strategy-related activities planned for the first half of 2020 had been suspended and the impact of the mental health developments due to workplace lockdowns received special focus. The main issues addressed included isolation, managing family responsibilities, dealing with uncertainty, and supporting children and dependents. In addition, requests for emergency support were received, including for domestic violence suffered by staff working from home.

5. The UN had developed training on domestic abuse for managers, as well as guidance for survivors, and rolled them out in parallel with the other work

to implement the Strategy, and posted information on all these issues on the Mental Health Matters [website](#). In addition, UN headquarters had recognized efforts made to offer headquarters-comparable support to staff in the field during the pandemic. Indeed, a concerted effort by UNISERV and FICSA to support staff in the field had achieved increased involvement of the field staff unions.

6. The Mental Health Board would address the stigma related to mental health issues, including during the pandemic. The UN Secretary-General and numerous world leaders had helped to raise awareness by stressing the need for a healthy workforce.

7. FICSA had focused on the creation of a template to guide staff representatives in keeping track of their organizations' implementation of the Strategy. When finalized, representatives could access the template on the Mental Health Matters website early in 2021. In the meantime, FICSA had promoted the rollout of Mental Health Month as a way of expanding the activities of Mental Health Day, 10 October 2020. The event prompted extensive discussion around the need to reduce stigma. FICSA offered extensive training on mental health that could help representatives to be more effective when dealing with staff's problems and related issues.

8. The Advisory Panel, which advised and issued recommendations to the Implementation Board, had started its work despite the impact of the pandemic. It had met twice to develop terms of reference, and determine the governance of the Panel and the structure of its work. It aimed to develop procedures and protocols for staff requiring assistance.

9. The Advisory Panel's planned work would address a variety of issues faced by staff, including reporting on suicidal tendencies, post-traumatic stress disorder for staff working with refugees, and stress and burnout for the most vulnerable groups affected by the pandemic, such as young people and women. It recognized the need to train managers, to equip them with the competency and soft skills to better address the issues related to the mental health of the staff they supervised.

10. Further, the Strategy and Duty of Care needed to be viewed as a framework to help staff deal with issues related to harassment, bullying, abuse of power, discrimination and racism. Training and other activities would lead to a collective understanding of the real issues surrounding mental health, as well as the need for cultural and social behavioral change. Social media might play a major role in raising awareness on these important issues.

11. Finally, there were no limits on membership of the Advisory Panel; the participation of FICSA members would ensure that it represented staff's experiences. FICSA's ExCom could use SC's recommendations in its meetings with the Implementation Board and the Advisory Panel, and other fora.

12. In the ensuing discussion, participants commended the ExCom's work to support implementation of the Strategy, asked it to maintain its efforts and stressed the needs for organizations to share information, to ensure training for

managers and to hold managers accountable for the implementation of the Strategy.

13. The joint sessions of standing committees, taking place in January 2021 as part of the 74th FICSA Council, would enable joint discussion and the inclusion of each committee's perspective. They could also provide the basis for future discussions on such cross-sectoral themes as remote working, agile contract modalities and enabling technologies. Those collective efforts could inform staff representatives of all the questions that they needed to raise with management, including those related to social security and mental health.

14. Other participants described their experiences in dealing with staff affected by mental ill health, noting that in most cases the challenge was to deal with managers who lacked the training effectively to support staff and the staff representatives' efforts. The recruitment process could include testing managers' soft skills, to ensure they have the capacity to manage people.

15. Speakers expressed concern about requests for long-term sick leave from staff experiencing bullying, abuse or harassment by managers – sometimes senior managers. Staff representatives faced difficulties in obtaining information about such requests because HR units classified them as confidential. The Standing Committee on Staff-Management Relations had raised similar concerns, particularly in relation to abuse of authority and bullying by managers and the increased staff requests for extended sick leave. In addition, a staff satisfaction survey had revealed the need for more accountability by managers and concluded with an appeal for better use of performance management to ensure accountability at all levels.

16. A participant described the efforts of new management at FAO to address mental health issues. A staff-satisfaction survey had led to the creation of a task force at various levels of the organization to deal with the issues raised. The latest would involve the Ethics Office, the Ombudsman's office and the Office of the Inspector General.

17. The FICSA President thanked the participants for their comments and assured them that FICSA would continue to work to deal with toxic workplaces, which caused the bulk of mental ill health in staff. Information from each organization would be shared with others, and the new template would support staff representatives in their efforts to implement the Strategy.

Recommendations

18. The SC recommended that FICSA should maintain a presence on all relevant committees and engage at all levels in discussions related to the subject of staff's mental health and well-being.

UN Joint Staff Pension Fund (UNJSPF)

19. The FICSA Executive Member for Compensation Issues (IAEA) provided background information and an update on matters including the work of the UN Joint Staff Pension Board, the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) audit [report](#) on the governance of UNJSPF, and an ad-hoc governance working group that the Pension Board had established to review the OIOS report and to

make recommendations on the way forward. The Pension Board's recommendations to the UN General Assembly had included extending the mandate of the ad-hoc working group to allow for a further review of the numerous items relevant to governance raised in the OIOS report.

20. Unfortunately, the UN General Assembly did not accept any of the Board's recommendations but requested that an external entity conduct a similar review and make recommendations. Mosaic Governance Advisors, LLC was selected, and presented a list of recommendations in a report to the Pension Board. Owing to the limited amount of time between the reception of the Mosaic report and the start of the next Pension Board session, it was agreed that the governance working group would review the recommendations on the Board's behalf, and gather feedback from the various staff pension committees.

21. The working group included representatives of the UN General Assembly, the UN Secretary-General, the retirees' federation and specialized agencies. The group presented a report to the Pension Board in advance of a special session, planned for February 2021, to discuss the Mosaic report and to make recommendations to the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly.

22. Mosaic's recommendations included reducing in the size and changing the composition of the Pension Board. Some current members, concerned by the potential exclusion of their voices and that a small number of large entities would make decisions affecting all, opposed that recommendation. While the recommendations also covered the frequency of Board meetings, the length of terms and continuity, many aspects required clarification, including terms of reference and the Ethical Code of Conduct. The working group had prepared a long list of questions for Mosaic, and sought to receive the answers before meeting with its representatives.

23. Members of the Fifth Committee asked that the working group's report be issued as soon as possible. Through the Chair of the Pension Board, the working group responded that it had analysed Mosaic's recommendations, but had not yet considered the input from all the staff pension committees of member organizations.

24. In addition, the pandemic had not affected the time required to process new separation cases; Mr Pedro Guazo had been confirmed as the new Representative of the Secretary-General on the Pension Board, and the end-of-year evaluation showed the required contribution rate had been sufficient to ensure that UNJSPF's liabilities were met. The FICSA President had participated in the Pension Board and other pension-related meetings, and provided valuable support.

25. In the ensuing discussion, a speaker expressed concern about the work of the ad-hoc governance working group and the need for SC to be kept informed of developments.

26. The FICSA President stressed the need for staff representatives to remain involved with all activities related to UNJSPF and the work of the pension committees in their organizations, and to keep FICSA informed of any relevant

issues. The FICSA General Secretary suggested that staff representatives who belong to their organizations' pension committees consider becoming more involved in SC's work, since UNJSPF was a matter of concern for all. Further, FICSA approached the UNJSPF Secretariat about providing training for staff representatives to ensure that they could transfer knowledge.

27. A participant raised the question of staff struggling with mental health issues, such as work-related stress, and the impact on the pensions of those who must take early retirement because they could no longer work. The FICSA President responded that staff with work-related mental health issues could obtain disability pensions, but the information was very difficult to obtain and current rules, regulations and processes made such disability claims difficult to prove.

Recommendations

28. The SC recommended that the FICSA ExCom should continue its collaborative efforts with the UN Joint Staff Pension Board and maintain a strong presence in all relevant committees and working groups.

29. The SC recommended that FICSA should continue negotiations with the UNJSPF Secretariat to ensure training be made available to staff representatives on matters related to staff pensions.

30. The SC recommended that the FICSA ExCom should:

- **encourage staff representatives to join the pension committees of their organizations and to stay informed of developments; and**
- **invite such staff representatives to attend SC meetings, which would permit it to report updates and developments to FICSA members.**

Survey of medical insurance plans for minimum standards

31. The SC Chair provided background information on the survey, which would be conducted to obtain information from FICSA membership on the different medical insurance plans used by various organizations. The systems of payments and premiums differed widely, with no uniformity of providers and procedures. Recommendations [FICSA/C/73/D/12 and D/13](#) suggested hiring a consultant to compile information on the different plans; before doing so, FICSA would present an initial set of data to enable members to see the common features and the procedures that may be adopted as baseline information. The aim was to use the information gathered to recommend basic, standard procedures and best practices at the UN level, as a tool for staff representatives to use when negotiating insurance contracts in their organizations.

32. Participants were requested to comment on the proposed list of questions (Appendix 2), to ensure consensus on the questions and their reflection of the issues of concern to staff. In view of the need for the survey to be concise, SC agreed to set up a working group to rework the questions and return them to SC by the end of January 2021. Participants from AP-in-FAO, CTBTO and

ICAO agreed to serve on the group and the FICSA President offered to review its work.

Recommendation

33. The Standing Committee recommended that FICSA should launch a survey to determine standard procedures and best practices in place at the UN level to support staff representatives in their negotiations with providers of medical insurance.

Nomination of SC officers and core group members

34. The following delegates were nominated as Standing Committee officers:

- Paola Franceschelli (FAO/UGSS) as Chair
- Michelle Delinde (CTBTO) as Vice-Chair
- Andrew Brown (ICAO) as Vice-Chair

35. The following SC participants were nominated as members of the core group:

- Birahim Fall (UPU)
- Viera Seben (ICAO)
- Tanya Quinn-Maguire (FICSA)
- Tracy Tollmann (UNGSC)
- Silvia Mariangeloni (FAO/WFP)
- Rajesh Mehta (WHO/SEARO)
- Cosimo Melpignano (UNGSC)
- Mary Jean Abrazado (UNFCCC)
- Khalid Aizat (WHO/GSC)

Other business

36. The SC Chair referred the Standing Committee to decision #9 of the the 73rd Council, which was related to after-service health insurance (ASHI). SC had recommended that the FICSA ExCom voice its concern on the UN General Assembly resolution on cost-containment through the appropriate channels. Unfortunately, no action had been taken because the relevant committee had not met. She asked the Standing Committee members for their support to monitor the issue and for suggestions on how best to follow up on this matter.

37. The FICSA President noted that the ASHI working group ceased to exist in 2019. The funding of ASHI was an issue for the UN Secretariat and some of the specialized agencies, although several had taken steps for the funding of their after service commitments. Members should keep the ExCom informed of issues related to ASHI.

Appendix 1. Participants

Chair/Coordinator	Paola Franceschelli (FAO/UGSS)
Rapporteur	Andrew Brown (ICAO)
President, FICSA	Tanya Quinn-Maguire (UNAIDS)
General Secretary, FICSA	Evelyn Kortum (WHO/HQ)
Members, FICSA ExCom	Imed Zabaar (IAEA), Kay Miller (WHO/EURO)
Regional Representative(s)	Rajesh Mehta (WHO/SEARO)

Staff Association/Union

AP-in-FAO	Jakob Skoet
FAO/WFP-UGSS	Susan Murray, Silvia Mariangeloni
IAEA	Katja Haslinger, Andrea Kamara, Gwendolyn Prajisteanu-Kourie, Debra Weisweiller
ICAO	Viera Seben
IFAD	Victoria Valenzi
IMO	Juan Lyu
IPU	Sally-Anne Sader
SCBD	Lisa Pedicelli
UNFCCC	Mary Jean Abrazado, Miguel Alejandro Naranjo Gonzalez, Tracy Tollmann
UNGSC	Cosimo Melpignano, Vito Musa
UPU	Birahim Fall
WHO/AFRO	Hamidou Bague
WHO/GSC KL	Khalid Aizat
WHO/WPRO	Roxanne Divina

Members with associate status

OPCW	Alberto Fernández
CTBTO	Michelle Delinde, Grace Sseruwagi, Glenda Wolstenholme

Associations with consultative status

AMFIE	Svend Booth
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Guests

WMU	Anne Pazaver
FICSA Intern	Shaina Erika Seki

Appendix 2. Initial set of questions for the survey of medical insurance plans

1. Name of insurer
- 2 A. Breakdown of staff insured, by category and the average age (Professional/GS/NOs/Retirees)
- 2 B. Breakdown of staff insured by contractual status (Permanent/Continuing/FT/ST/Consultants/Retirees)
3. Is there an internal committee dealing with the contract?
4. Are staff reps present on this committee? [Please attach ToRs of the Committee to the reply]
5. Are staff reps involved at any stage during the tender process?
6. Structure of the plan:
 - Who is entitled to join the plan?
 - Is the plan compulsory for staff members?
 - Are there optional plans available in addition to the basic plan? If YES, how is the relevant premium calculated and paid for?
7. What is the coverage provided by your plan?
 - a. full reimbursement of claims
 - b. partial reimbursement of claims (please specify percentage)
 - c. are the following type of medical expenses capped:
 - dental
 - psychotherapy
 - physiotherapy
 - others (please specify).
8. Is the plan subsidized by your organization? If yes, please specify percentage contribution of your organization.
9. Is the insurance premium paid by the staff member calculated as:
 - (a) a flat amount(s), irrespective of the staff member's salary, only depending on the number of insured persons/family members/dependents; or
 - (b) a percentage of the staff member's salary?
10. If the answer to question 9 is b, what is the basis for calculation of the premium paid by the staff member?
 - (a) net salary
 - (b) net salary + post adjustment

(c) net salary + post adjustment + allowances

(d) gross salary

(e) pensionable remuneration

(f) other (please specify)

11. If the answer to question 9 is b, is the percentage applied for calculation of salary deduction equally applied at all grades/salary levels, or does it change across grades? (If the latter, please provide details.)

12. Is a ceiling applied on the premium paid by staff, beyond which the organization is required to pay for the difference (gap-filling measure)? If yes, please provide details on how the ceiling is calculated.

13. Is a specific recourse mechanism in place to handle controversial issues regarding the application of the insurance policy? If YES, please provide details

14. Is there a profit-sharing account, funded by the financial surplus (if any) carried forward from one insurance year to the next?

15. Does staff have access to national health care in their duty station? If yes, is the access equally applicable to local and non-local staff?

16. Are the same insurance terms equally applied to headquarters and field staff?

17. What is the percentage of retired staff in your organization?

18. Which of the provisions above apply to retirees' medical/health coverage?

19. What is the present coverage for COVID-19-related pathologies?

Detailed information on recommendations

Recommendation for agenda item 3	Implementation of the mental health strategy
Summary of issue	The SC recommended that staff representatives should promote the implementation of the United Nations System Mental Health and Well-being Strategy in each organization, including through organizations' providing training to all levels of staff on effectively responding to and dealing with the Strategy throughout the UN system.
Responsible person(s)	SC Chairs and Vice-Chairs
Next step(s)/ specific action(s)	
Deadline	
Resources required (indicate estimated cost if applicable)	<input type="checkbox"/> Specialist/Consultant <input type="checkbox"/> Legal Adviser <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SC Chair/Vice-Chair <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Core group member(s) <input type="checkbox"/> FICSA Secretariat <input type="checkbox"/> FICSA ExCom (Compensation, Field, Treasurer, Other) <input type="checkbox"/> Volunteer/Intern <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Please specify)
Deliverable	<input type="checkbox"/> Literature review <input type="checkbox"/> Paper/Article <input type="checkbox"/> Background paper with options <input type="checkbox"/> Legal article/review/opinion <input type="checkbox"/> Talking points for high-level fora/forum – Advocacy <input type="checkbox"/> Comparative study <input type="checkbox"/> Good practices <input type="checkbox"/> Recommendations/ guideline for SAs/unions
Issue for high-level fora	<input type="checkbox"/> International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) <input type="checkbox"/> High-Level Committee for Management (HLCM) <input type="checkbox"/> HR Network <input type="checkbox"/> Joint Pension Board <input type="checkbox"/> UN General Assembly <input type="checkbox"/> Inter-Agency Security and Management Network (IASMN) <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Please specify)