

DRAFT REPORT OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON FIELD ISSUES

Introduction

1. The Standing Committee on Field Issues (FIELD – see Appendix 1 for participants) met on 15 February (virtual session) and 26 and 27 April 2022 to address its agenda. It elected Véronique Allain (SBCD) as Rapporteur.

Activities during 2021

2. FIELD discussed the actions taken to implement the [decisions](#) of the 74th FICSA Council related to field issues.

3. For example, the FICSA ExCom had continued its active involvement with ICSC, and joined the discussions on the categorization of hardship duty-stations away from HQs with a particular focus on the educational aspect for colleagues in the field, who often needed information. A survey was launched to get feedback from FICSA members about their specific issues in assessing their local living conditions at hardship duty stations. FICSA had posted the analysis and results on its [website](#).

4. To improve the questionnaire used in the annual review of hardship classification conducted by ICSC, FIELD and the FICSA ExCom had suggested including questions on local health facilities and services available to UN staff. The topic had not been included in the agenda of ICSC's Tripartite Working Group (TWG) at its annual meeting in early December 2021, owing to lack of time and lack of capacity in the UN medical services. The FICSA ExCom would work with the three Staff Federations, FICSA, CCISUA and UNISERV, on submitting a document to present to the July 2022 session of ICSC which would address the issue of poor data provided in the health portion of the hardship questionnaires for many duty stations under review, and point out the apparent lack of a UN agreed minimum standard of healthcare for UN staff deployed away from the HQs.

5. FICSA advocacy to the Inter-Agency Security Management Network (IASMN) is discussed below. The participants were informed that a Working Group under the Chairmanship of the United Nations Department of Security and Safety (UNDSS) was established to review the current Fire Safety Policy in UN buildings.

6. FICSA had reached out to UN Globe to identify matters of concerns to the LGBTQI community in the field, particularly the support such staff would need to facilitate onboarding, installation and general conditions of work and life in the duty stations away from HQs.

7. In 2021, both the FICSA ExCom and FIELD had worked to ensure that the medical evacuation (MEDEVAC) processes are adequately included in and aligned with the hardship-classification

framework. Membership to the MEDEVAC Task Force was requested, but unfortunately not accepted. As there had been no opportunity to discuss that topic at the last ICSC meeting on hardship classification in December 2021, FICSA would continue to pursue it.

8. A survey on mobility policies and processes available within FICSA members' organizations was not conducted, owing to obvious survey fatigue.

IASMN sessions 34 and 35

9. Mary Mone (UNESCO), who had represented FICSA at the 35th meeting of IASMN, explained that the agenda had included: the UN Digital ID project, security clearance procedures, Electronic Travel Advisory (ETA), commercial air travel safety, road safety, hostage incident management, the *Manual of Physical Security for UN Common Premises* (potentially renamed *Physical Security Manual for UN Premises*) and a review of fire safety policy.

Recommendations

10. **FIELD recommended that the FICSA ExCom should:**

- **continue being actively involved in the IASMN meetings to be held until the 2023 FICSA Council; and**
- **take the necessary steps to make available on the FICSA website, for easy access to all members, the policies of the United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) on road safety, the physical security for UN premises, aviation safety and fire safety.**

11. **FIELD recommended that the FICSA ExCom should request that staff representatives be considered for a support role for affected staff members and their families involved in a hostage-incident-management situation.**

FICSA report on classification of duty stations according to hardship

12. The FICSA ExCom Member for Field and Regional Issues reported on the ICSC TWG in reviewing the 106 duty stations in Latin America and the Caribbean, the 29 duty stations in the Commonwealth Independent States (CIS) and the 44 in Middle-East Countries. The hardship classification process was used to rate duty stations around the world where IP were present for one year or longer.

13. The 2017 revised hardship-classification methodology was not fit for purpose for some duty stations, particularly in the Middle East, due to the political and economic local situations, and in CIS countries, due to factors such as isolation, local conditions, housing and climate. While the Ukraine duty stations were rated favourably in December 2021, including Mariupol, Odessa, Kyiv and Kharkiv, those data became totally outdated and UN staff and their families were evacuated.

14. The gathering of data on health facilities and health care continued to be poor or not corresponding to the reality on the ground for UN staff deployed in those duty stations, so there were discussions of revising the methodology to be more transparent, evidence based, data driven, insulated from political pressure and treated similarly to the cost-of-living methodology, the salary survey methodology, etc.

15. The FICSA representatives in the TWG (Tripartite Working Group) thought that many UN country teams in several duty stations under review remained ignorant of how to fill out the questionnaires and why participating in that exercise every three years was important. Because the level of classification of a duty station had a financial impact, Member States (through ICSC) had

increased their scrutiny of the process, but the actual conditions of life and work needed to be properly assessed to inform staff. In other words, UN agencies, the staff federations and the ICSC Secretariat still needed to do more work was to raise awareness about this important feature in the deployment of UN staff.

Recommendation

16. FIELD recommended that the FICSA ExCom should:

- **alert all stakeholders (ICSC, UN organizations and other staff federations) to the importance of the hardship classification exercise at all levels, in sessions of ICSC, HLCM and the HR Network sessions, and the Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Forum;**
- **work with other staff federations to build the knowledge of all categories of staff posted in the field and regions, and to raise their awareness of the importance of providing as much data as possible in the hardship questionnaires, to accurately capture the local living conditions; and**
- **in its efforts to raise awareness, spell out how to initiate, where necessary, the review -of ICSC decisions on hardship classification.**

Impact of COVID-19 on field staff

17. Mindful that the pandemic was not yet over, the participants exchanged experiences, best practices and stories in order to identify elements to watch in the post-pandemic period that would form the baseline of the “new normal”. HQ-based UN agencies and their regional offices were now self-sufficient in dealing with, for example, vaccine rollouts, testing, return to offices, ensuring the availability of information-technology (IT) equipment. The focus should move to supporting field offices in dealing with the new normal’, as resources were limited and several restrictions were still in place.

18. Some security officers had been obliged to be on the premises of their UN agencies during the peaks of the pandemic, as had cleaners and drivers. The UN had a duty of care to provide a safe working environment for all staff and to preserve their well-being. In an example of good collaboration with colleagues in the same duty station, staff organized a car-pooling system to avoid having to take the public local transport, as this reduced the risk of infection. Finally, flexibility could continue being applied to allow staff to take their accumulated leave days in an orderly manner, without stressing and impacting personal and work commitments.

Recommendation

19. FIELD recommended that the FICSA ExCom should:

- **monitor the situation to prevent the establishment of a two-tier system in which staff based in HQs were free to work remotely while staff in smaller duty stations in the field had to work in their offices.**
- **engage with the regional representatives to advocate for good collaboration and communication between on-site and remote-working staff.**
- **continue advocating for the duty of care to provide a safe working environment for all staff and preserve their health and well-being.**

Nomination of SC officers and core group members

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

- Sasha Martynenko (WHO/EURO) as Chair;
- Marc Brown (FAO/WFP-UGSS) and Tonia Rifaey (WHO/EMRO) appointed Vice-Chairs
- Véronique Allain (SBCD) as Rapporteur.

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

FICSA President	Tanya Quinn-Maguire (UNAIDS)
FICSA General Secretary	Cosimo Melpignano (UNGSC)
FICSA Excom members	Véronique Allain (SCBD), Pilar Vidal (PAHO), Line Kaspersen (AP-in-FAO)
FICSA Regional Representative	Anthony Ndinguri (ICAO Nairobi)

Appendix 1. Participants

Staff association/union

AP-in-FAO	Line Kaspersen, Florence Tartanac
FAO/WFP-UGSS	Paola Franceschelli, Marc Brown, Luca Vecchia, Cristina Lemmi
ICAO	Alba Anastassi, Anthony Karanja Ndinguri
IMO	Folake Odulana
PAHO	Claudia Pescetto, Daniela Cracel
SCBD	Véronique Allain
UNIDO	Steve Eales
UNFCCC	Marjorie Manduli
UNGSC	Cosimo Lunedì, Cosimo Chimienti
UNICTF	Maria Del Rocio Martin Vargas
UPU	Birahim Fall
WHO/AFRO	Harris Benito Koubemba Mona, Symplice Mbola Mbassi, Hamidou Bague
WHO/GSQ	Sharifah Asmaa' Alwee Aljuned
WHO/EURO	Tyrone Sy, Oleksandr Martynenko
WHO/SEARO	Ritesh Singh

Members with Observer Status

FUNSA Guinea	Virginie Beavogui, Lucie Gnongo Beavogui
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