

REPORT OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

Introduction

1. The Standing Committee on Human Resources Management (HRM - see Appendix 1 for participants) met on 1 March (virtual session) and 26 and 27 April 2022 (hybrid sessions) to address its agenda, and elected Oleksandr Martynenko (WHO/EURO) as Rapporteur for the virtual session, and Daniella Salmon (WHO/HQ) for the hybrid sessions at the 75th Council in Vienna.

Activities in 2021

2. HRM discussed the actions taken to implement the [decisions](#) of the 74th FICSA Council related to its area of expertise.

3. FICSA continued to advocate the current contractual framework (fixed-term/temporary/continuous contracts) as fit for purpose. The call for an additional type of contract was born out of requests for flexible options, intrinsically linked to project-based funding. In 2020, [organizations](#) confirmed such appointment types as a requirement, among other contractual adjustments. Insisting that any change to current contractual arrangements need to be solidly grounded, ICSC established a working group, of which FICSA was part, to investigate the matter more closely. It analysed organizations' implementation of the current contractual framework, general practices and external trends.

4. The results of the research conducted concluded that the required flexibility was already available through existing provisions, and highlighted the risk of unfairness, unequal treatment and inadequate recruitment practices. Instead, the working group recommended harmonizing the existing parameters of temporary contracts, and made a strong argument for expanding the use of continuous appointments, as a staple of an independent and reliable civil service. The group also recommended harmonizing annual leave for short-term appointments. Discussion identified funding gaps (core funding and ear-marked funding) as a general hindrance to adequately using suitable contract types, although organizations were requested to use the current contractual framework in planning and funding processes.

5. In addressing that topic, HLCM recommendations from the Task Force on the Future of Work for the UN Workforce proposed moving to agile working contracts, and introducing remote working and enabling technologies. Staff representatives immediately opposed the agile, non-location contracts, not providing social security, that were proposed. The three staff federations

commissioned consultants to develop a unified position paper, through a research paper, including data from the private sector and certain Member States' civil services. The paper would be used as a basis for upcoming negotiations at ICSC sessions.

6. HRM agreed that the independent nature of the international civil service was the highest good to protect. ICSC was an ally in pushing back against new, agile contract types. While ICSC's mandate included the review of the contractual framework, it did not favour ongoing proposals.

7. During the 74th Council, HRM had attributed attempts to introduce agile contract were to cost-saving ambitions. The use, overuse and abuse of precarious working arrangements, through temporary contracts or consultants, and the use of agency workers were becoming more common.

8. The General Secretary then provided an account on the key consideration in the future of work and future workforce of the UN ([CEB/2020/HLCM/16](#), available on FICSA website). It would set up an action plan for staff unions/associations to play an active role during the digital transformation and address its impact. All discussions on the future workplace and work force needed to revolve around human-centric principles, in line with principles established at the [74th FICSA Council](#).

Recommendation

9. HRM recommended that FICSA should continue to take a conservative approach towards expanding the existing contractual framework.

The future of UN employment for both regular and non-regular staff

10. HRM briefly reviewed the most pertinent topics concerning the working conditions of contracted personnel, whether consultants, agency workers, experts or others. While the topic addressed all personnel contracted outside the regular UN contractual framework, discussions needed to be limited to the demographic that was performing de facto staff functions, and whose working conditions reflected those of regular staff.

11. HRM identified a series of risks affecting not only organizations in terms of knowledge and talent retention, but also individual staff (often members of staff associations/unions) in terms of performance and career. Those contracts offered an avenue for cost savings and avoidance of long-term liabilities.

12. The chair viewed the overlap of working cultures as at breaking point. The long-standing consensus was that the mandate of established staff representative bodies did not include discussions on the conditions of work of consultants, as those personnel were technically not eligible for representation. On a human scale, however, the situation was untenable.

13. HRM agreed on the importance of classifying the various types of contracted personnel:

- experts, usually contracted through procurement processes and remunerated on corporate rates;
- when-actually-employed personnel, generally contracted for hourly services (translation, editing, explicit deliverables, etc.); and
- consultants with abstract job descriptions and working conditions analogous to those of regular staff.

14. Despite being fundamentally different in concept, all types excluded provisions for, for example, pension, health insurance and legal recourse. A lack of clarity on legal status (privileges and immunities) as well as tax obligations was of particular concern.

15. The Chair described how he was building momentum to associate the contracted personnel in his organization, and elaborated on the benefits on establishing a legitimate voice and representation. Given how contracted personnel were more and more integrated into various administrative frameworks (ethics, accountability, working time, etc.), such a voice was ever more important. The UNIDO Staff Union, in cooperation with members of UNIDO contractors, had developed a working paper that was available to FICSA members upon request. The paper provided a comprehensive overview of key issues such as representation, host-country relations, the employment framework, organizational risks, and social security.

16. HRM then reviewed various forms of discrimination and abuse within such contractual arrangements, and their impact on young careers particularly. It was proposed that FICSA pilot-test making a permanent technical committee part of the HRM to focus all issues on contracted personnel in one forum.

17. The ensuing discussion included recognition of all ethical and contractual concerns (equal pay for equal work) as well as the various difficulties in onboarding contracted personnel. Junior categories of the workforce were particularly affected by these practices.

18. Moreover, the discussion showed that there was no universal application of standards or principles, either in hiring or administering contracted personnel. A downward trend in terms of conditions of service could be clearly identified. FICSA needed to further investigate the broader use of contracted personnel, and make the resulting information available to its members.

Recommendation

19. **HRM recommended that the FICSA ExCom should establish a technical committee on contractual personnel issues on a pilot basis for the 76th session of the FICSA Council, with a view to converting it to a permanent technical committee should its value be sustainable beyond the pilot phase.**

Post-COVID working culture: the future UN workplace

20. HRM viewed a comprehensive presentation on new ways of working and the complexities of defining a “new normal”. To minimize the risk of creating variations in the new normal across different locations, FICSA members needed continuously to exchange information on developments to ensure harmonization was achieved across the UN system.

21. HRM noted the changes in the workplace, mental health and well-being issues, conditions of service, and gender and enabling environment dimensions. Expected changes also included accelerated efforts in digitization, automation and redesigns of traditional workspaces. Best practices in workplace evolution always included a human-centric approach. Staff associations/unions needed to stand firm in advocating for a human-first approach and physical-workplace-based collaboration.

22. It was suggested that, to unleash the full potential of a workforce, a modern progressive employer should offer a compelling work experience, ensure duty of care and well-being, establish a

sense of belonging and secure long –term resilience. As member organizations implemented changes in different ways, FICSA members needed to remain vigilant and ensure they were not excluded from conversations. For example, UNFCCC had established a Network for Change to specifically address cultural and behavioural change, which included staff representation.

23. Participants argued strongly for the preservation of the physical workplace as key dimension to ensure creativity, collaboration, connection, social interaction, creative collision, innovation, social bonding and lifelong learning. It was suggested that FICSA agree on a set of common indicators and consistent terminology when addressing change towards a new normal. A more focused discussion at the 76th session of FICSA Council might provide more clarity to that effect.

24. The subsequent discussion highlighted how changes of varying scope and pace were implemented at different locations. The involvement of staff representatives also varied. There was clear evidence of workplace concepts that worked and others that did not. A follow-up session to this agenda item would thus benefit from collecting data on different concepts, perspectives and ideas. The return of the conversation on dress code was a particular highlight during the discussion, pointing towards the advent of broader cultural considerations.

25. HRM called for clear language and precise terminology, terms such as hybrid, hot-desking, Open Space, etc. needed to be better understood. While different concepts were being tried, that evidence of their success and/or failure was not centrally available. Training was also needed. HRM would address those concerns in more detail during the 76th FICSA Council.

Any other business

26. Members expressed a desire to revisit the topic of hiring standards, job classifications, and the timeliness of the Noblemaire and Flemming principles. The incoming chairs would consider this item for inclusion in the work plan.

27. An appeal was made to provide the HRM training that had been offered during the pre-Council session on 24 April 2022 in French to francophone constituent members. The chair would raise this issue with the FICSA ExCom.

Nomination of HRM officers and core group members

28. The following delegates were nominated and subsequently elected as HRM officers:

- Steven-Geoffrey Eales (UNIDO) as Chair
- Ambretta Perrino (UNFCCC) as Vice-Chair
- Daniella Salmon (WHO/HQ) as Vice-Chair

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

- Claudia Moreira Lopez (PAHO/WHO)
- Florence Tartanac (AP-in-FAO)
- Kay Miller (WHO/EURO)
- Cosimo Chimienti (UNGSC)

- Mark Brown (WFP/FAO-UGSS)
- Tonia Rifaey (WHO/EMRO)

Appendix 1. Participants

Officers

Chair	Steven-Geoffrey Eales (UNIDO)
Vice-Chair	Ambretta Perrino (UNFCCC)
Rapporteurs	Oleksandr Martynenko (WHO/EURO) Daniella Salmon (WHO/HQ)
FICSA President	Tanya Quinn-Maguire (UNAIDS)
FICSA General Secretary	Cosimo Melpignano (UNGSC)
FICSA ExCom members	Véronique Allain (SCBD), Pilar Vidal (PAHO/WHO); Line Kaspersen (AP-in-FAO), Tracy Tollman (UNFCCC), Kay Miller (WHO/EURO)
Regional Representatives	Jesus Garcia Jimenez (ILOTIC), Anthony Ndinguri Karanja (ICAO)

Staff associations/unions

AP-in-FAO	Jakob Skoet, Florence Tartanac
FAO/WFP-UGSS	Paola Franceschelli, Silvia Mariangeloni, Marc Brown, Kirby O'Malley
IAEA	Borana Shehu
ICAO	Andrew Brown, Sanya Dehinde, Viera Seben
IMO	Shereen Barry, Elene Sarria, Fola Odulana
OSCE	Milan Jelenkovic
PAHO/WHO	Glenda Moreira Lopez
UNAIDS	Andrea Palazzi
UNFCCC	Miguel Naranjo Gonzalez, Mary Jean Abrazado, Marjorie Manduli
UNESCO	Elia Matias
UNGSC	Cosimo Chimienti, Cosimo Lunedì, Alessandra Marcorio
UNICTF	Maria Del Rocio Martin Vargas
UPU	Stephane Vuillemin, Szymon Pisarek
WHO/AFRO	Symphice Mbola Mbassi, Hamidou Bague
WHO/EMRO	Tonia Rifaey, Wallaa El-Moawen
WHO/EURO	Aleksandr Martynenko, Tyrone Sy

WHO/GSC

Sharifah Asmaa Alwee Aljuned

WHO/SEARO

Kim Sungchol

WHO/WPRO

Jasmine Vergara

WMO

Andres Orias Bleichner

Members with associate status

CTBTO

Maria Zelda Rojas, Jennifer Ylo

OPCW

Arshad Qadri, Alberto Fernandez

Members with consultative status

EBRD

Marina Parsons

EMBL

Maria Cerezo