



WRITTEN STATEMENT BY
THE FEDERATION OF INTERNATIONAL CIVIL SERVANTS' ASSOCIATIONS
(FICSA)
TO THE FIFTH COMMITTEE OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY
AT ITS 77th SESSION

(New York, November 2022)

Ms. Tanya Quinn-Maguire, FICSA President

Mr. Chairman,

Distinguished Members of the Fifth Committee,

On behalf of the Executive Committee of the Federation of International Civil Servants' Associations, which represents the voices of 40,000 staff across the United Nations common system, thank you for the opportunity to address this meeting. Please also accept our congratulations to the Chair and other Bureau members on their appointments.

FICSA thanks the ICSC Chairman, Mr. Larbi Djacta, for his presentation of document A/77/30. We would like to take this opportunity congratulate Mr. Djacta on his re-election and thank him for enabling a healthy exchange of opinions from all stakeholders during ICSC meetings over the past 12 months. FICSA continued to maintain a constructive dialogue with the ICSC Secretariat and with the distinguished members of the Commission and looks forward to continuing in this manner going forward

FICSA believes that a strong and independent international civil service is imperative for our organizations to deliver on their mandates, as I believe you all do as signatories to the UN Charter.

As such, we have advocated strongly during our discussions with the ICSC for measures that will protect that concept and ensure that the Common System continues to attract and retain the most competent staff members for generations to come.

The on-going review of the jurisdictional set-up of the United Nations common system is a matter of prime concern to staff in our organizations, as it is to you. FICSA and its sister Federations regret that our request to participate in the meetings of the working group as an observer was denied. Instead, FICSA received briefings and was invited to comment on proposals that had already been discussed at length and decided upon by the UN Legal Advisors networks. Going forward, FICSA respectfully requests the full participation of the Staff Federations in these consultations. Failing to do so, would risk strengthening any negative perceptions concerning the lack of transparency in the application of the ICSC methodologies to determine the level of compensation for staff. Our Federation is of the opinion that the proposal to establish a joint chamber as outlined in the report of the Secretary-General (A/77/222) to the 5th Committee would not address the root cause and would infringe on the independence and autonomy of the tribunals.

FICSA understands that there is a proposal before this Committee to amend the statutes of the ICSC with a view to eliminating any legal ambiguity which may have contributed towards the current post adjustment situation in Geneva. We remain concerned that this issue has not been resolved, despite the vast improvement in the consultation process with the ICSC during the last round of surveys. We commend all stakeholders for the concerted effort to improve consultation, transparency, and communication with staff over the past months, including all efforts to reach a workable solution during the summer session of the ICSC, and regret that those efforts did not ultimately yield the expected results. FICSA awaits with interest the legal advice from the OLA, particularly their opinion on whether the proposed amendment will resolve this matter once and for all.

The approval by the General Assembly to harmonize the accrual of annual leave across the common system for staff on temporary appointments as per paragraph 63(a) of document A/77/30 will

ensure that the UN common system treats its staff equitably and staff at the same grade, working side by side, do not experience vastly different leave entitlements.

With regard to the revised methodology for children's and secondary dependency allowance, we note with concern that staff have not received any legitimately expected adjustments in line with the agreed ICSC methodology since 2011. This allowance is a fundamental pillar of the benefits and compensation package for UN staff. As such, this allowance is also a factor when holistically addressing the issue of gender, diversity, and rejuvenation of the workforce to ensure that the UN remains an employer of choice and continues to attract and retain the most competent staff members. While FICSA would prefer to retain the current methodology, we would support the recommendations in paragraphs 170 and 171 of document A/77/30 as a pragmatic attempt to resolve this long-standing issue.

FICSA is proud to have been an active participant in the ICSC WG on parental leave and the related technical task force. One of our aims in that WG was to ensure that we delivered on the often-repeated goals of the UN GA related to the rejuvenation of the workforce as well gender parity. FICSA believes the decision presented in paragraph 91 of document A/77/30 is a step towards the UN achieving those two goals for a relatively minor financial investment by the organizations. FICSA proudly supports this decision as we believe it provides for the equitable treatment of all parents across our workforce and demonstrates a commitment to future generations of staff that the UN is working to modernize its workplace and understands their expectations on this important topic.

With regard to the review of the level of the hardship allowance, FICSA notes with appreciation the modest increase to this allowance resulting from the update based on the agreed methodology. This adjustment will address concerns raised by staff and organizations and will help to ensure that the UN can continue to attract staff to the duty stations where they are needed most. UN staff members in the field are the heart of our organizations and they are key to delivering on our organizations mandates in the most difficult of circumstances, all the while without any family support system.

Following extensive discussions and thorough analysis held throughout the past years, new revised methodologies for surveys of the best prevailing conditions of employment at headquarters duty stations and non-headquarters duty stations and similar duty stations for locally recruited staff have been approved by the Commission and presented for your review and consideration. FICSA believes the ICSC working group on this topic fully complied with the standards established by the Charter related to the employment of locally recruited staff which provides that organizations of the United Nations system must be competitive with those employers in the same labour market who recruit staff of equally high calibre and qualifications for work which is similar in nature and equal in value to that of the organizations. Remaining competitive to both attract and retain staff of these high standards requires that the conditions of service for the locally recruited staff be determined by reference to the best prevailing conditions of service among other employers in the locality. Overall, the revised methodologies captured most of the concerns raised by the Local Salary Committees and other stakeholders. FICSA will participate in the Pilot Monitoring Mechanism and will share its experience from the upcoming accelerated round of surveys with the Commission as well as with the members of the 5th Committee.

Mr. Chair, distinguished delegates, the common system organizations now exist almost permanently in a situation where they are being requested to do more and more with less and less. Our members fully understand the state of permacrisis and economic reality of the world that we live in. However, the consistent lack of adequate resources not only has an impact on programme implementation, it also incrementally adds to the ever-increasing pressure on staff which results in a direct impact on their mental health and wellbeing, with the real and present threat of burnout or worse.

The staff of our independent International Civil Service are the people who work to fulfil our collective commitments. In doing so, they make enormous sacrifices and sometimes even put their lives at risk. We trust that members of this Committee will understand that, under these circumstances, our fulfilment of the duty of care requires making a modest investment as

recommended by the Commission to help ensure that the UN Common System continues to be fit for purpose and effectively deliver on our mandates to the people we serve.

Thank you for your attention and I wish you all the best in your continuing deliberations.
