

*76<sup>th</sup> session of the FICSA Council*

*Statement by Ms. Kelly T. Clements – HLCM Vice-Chair*

Dear colleagues and partners, greetings to you all.

And thank you sincerely for inviting us again to join this council meeting.

Apologies on behalf of the HLCM Chair for not being able to join herself today, and I myself would have appreciated joining you in person but am on an operational mission to Iraq.

This is indeed a unique opportunity to reach, through the federation, nearly 40,000 colleagues around the world.

The fact that you are all gathered today in Valencia means fortunately that the peak phase of the Covid-19 pandemic is behind us and we can resume in-person meetings across the world, which I know we all missed very much.

The long term impact, however, continues and the number and magnitude of the crises in the world have increased, putting at risk decades of progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals.

The purpose and the relevance of the UN System is as important as always, and the populations we serve, the governments and civil societies we support and the partners with which we operate are counting on us.

We must acknowledge that the pandemic has taken an important toll on all of us. Many have lost relatives, friends, and colleagues. Our lives, both professional and personal, were seriously and suddenly disrupted, leaving many of us tired or resolved to change course in our personal or professional lives.

But despite the difficulties, the UN system continued to fulfill its mission. To overcome the practical challenges, we redefined our ways of interacting and working with each other and introduced new approaches, simpler and more effective processes which we are now mainstreamed in our respective organizations.

So, kudos to all our personnel that carried on with enormous strength under these uniquely difficult circumstances. Bravo to all of those who stepped forward with innovative ideas to improve our ways of working.

**SOMETHING MISSING?** And to all of you, representatives of our workforce, who lead your teams through the most uncertain of times, you succeeded while maintaining a close collaboration and coordination within the UN system. (IF THIS IS WHAT IS INTENDED? IF NOT, REMOVE THE PARA)

The pandemic has been a catalyst for our organizations to start having more meaningful conversations about staff wellbeing, mental health and the importance of workplace culture. Many lessons have been identified and we are now acting on them.

At the HLCM level, our joint efforts are progressing. The Task Force on the Future of the UN Workforce has concluded its work at the end of last year, opening avenues to reshape our workplace culture for the better.

The Senior Leadership Commitments will further operationalize the UN Leadership Framework, as well as the “Boundaries at Work” and “Work—Life Harmony” guidelines.

The fight continues against sexual harassment and sexual exploitation and abuse, and we are also looking at ways to address better the many other forms of toxic behaviors and harassment that our personnel face around the world, including racism, sexism and gender discrimination.

Improving workplace culture is not just about fighting negative behaviors. It is also about promoting positive ones, sharing good practices, being more intentional and clear in our communication to our teams, improving our leadership, and expanding our staff support and counselling structures.

Of course, culture change is a long journey, and while I want to sincerely thank the members of the Task Force on the Future of the UN Workforce for their remarkable work over the past years, I can assure you that Occupational Health and Safety, Mental Health, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and Disability will remain high on the HLCM’s long list of priorities.

The pandemic showed us how inextricably linked our professional and personal lives are. We are all children, brothers, sisters, parents... and our loved ones are accompanying and supporting us in our work. Diversity is a strength of the UN system, and this diversity also exists at home. We come from diverse cultures and background, have lived different experiences, all of which shape our lives and our families. The endorsement of a new Parental Leave Framework by the ICSC represents a significant step towards acknowledging this diversity among us.

By advancing aggressively to achieve gender parity, the UN System is at the forefront of good practice employers and will hopefully also increase staff retention among younger colleagues and attract those who want to contribute to our mission, while maintaining a healthy family life.

This was a team effort involving ICSC leadership, management and staff federations, including FICSA which played a significant role throughout the development of this policy.

Let’s maintain this spirit of cooperation for our next common objectives. For ICSC, there are some significant items under discussion, two of which are very important to HLCM.

First, the new Standards of Conduct.

The revision of this important guidance is timely. It will put some basic questions back on the table:

- What does neutrality as an International Civil Servant look like?
- How do we reconcile that strict political neutrality with our inherent commitment to all aspects of human rights?

- And what is a useful frame – but also limitations - for our own political engagement as UN staff?
- How do we effectively integrate the various workstreams addressing prohibited, toxic or unwanted behavior in the workplace?
- How can we provide clear and practical guidance on what ethical and desirable behavior in the UN looks like?
- What are the guiding principles for our interaction and connection with external partners?

These are important questions, and we are looking forward to frank and constructive exchanges with the ICSC Commissioners and staff representatives.

The second item I wish to highlight is the Comprehensive Compensation Review soon to be conducted by the ICSC.

The objective is to ensure that the UN System remains an employer of choice for the next generation, and that we preserve the independent nature of the international public service.

This will surely be a longer-term discussion but it's also an opportunity to further reflect how the post-pandemic reality is different from the pre-Covid one.

While being mindful of the needs and desires of all personnel, this Review will have to take into account the challenging financial situation and the impact as a result on any publicly funded organization.

Indeed, the socio-economic impact of the pandemic is still being felt and Member States will continue to be under immense pressure to drive their – costly - domestic recoveries.

These lingering impacts are exacerbated by the war in Ukraine and the many other conflicts which drive humanitarian and development needs of affected people while they weigh on the public finances of our main donors.

We have to find ways to be more efficient in the use of our resources, to continue to deliver on our mandates, meet ever growing needs, and continue to provide affected people strong support.

We have proven that we can innovate and adapt to a highly dynamic global environment, supporting and learning from each other. FICSA is a great example of a place where the UN system comes together to ensure collaboration and cooperation towards our common goals.

We count on your contributions, your ideas, in the HLCM context as well as in the ICSC framework and in staff-management consultations within your individual agencies.

The HLCM Chair and all its members are mindful of the concerns and needs of all personnel, and we are looking forward to continue our dialogue and collaboration.

As you are watching this recording, I am in Iraq where the UN and all the members of the humanitarian and development community are doing remarkable work. The situation here is a

**stark reminder of the relevance of the UN system, and the importance of those who comprise it. That's you and all the colleagues you represent.**

**The HLCM Secretariat will liaise with the FICSA leadership team to make sure we find a way to collect questions and answer them in due course.**

**Let me thank you again for this opportunity to speak to you today. I wish you a successful and productive FICSA Council.**