

# CIRCULAR

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## OPENING STATEMENT

**DELIVERED BY**  
**THE FEDERATION OF INTERNATIONAL CIVIL SERVANTS' ASSOCIATIONS (FICSA)**  
**TO THE 90<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF THE INTERNATIONAL CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION (ICSC)**  
**(United Nations, Geneva, 12 October 2020)**

*Submitted by Tanya Quinn-Maguire, FICSA President*

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To: Chairs, Member Associations/Unions  
Members of the Executive Committee  
Chairs, Members with Associate Status  
Chairs, Associations with Consultative Status  
Presidents, Federations with Observer Status  
Chairs and Vice-Chairs of Standing Committees

From: Evelyn Kortum, FICSA General Secretary

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Mr. Chairman, Members of the Commission and Distinguished Colleagues,

FICSA looks forward to working with all members of the Commission over the coming days. I am happy to see that all of you that travelled to Geneva are safe and well and I am pleased to note that you and our colleagues joining us virtually have made it through this most challenging period of time.

The world is facing an extraordinary crisis. FICSA joins all of you in mourning those who have fallen victim to the scourge of COVID-19. We wish to express a profound sense of solidarity

with all countries and communities affected as the pandemic continues to take its toll the world over.

In that context, FICSA pays tribute to all International Civil Servants for their unflinching commitment to the mission and principles of their respective Organizations in these unprecedented times. We particularly acknowledge the sacrifices made by our colleagues who have continued to undertake critical missions, even to high-risk areas. Many have gone far above and beyond the call of duty.

There is no time like the present crisis to reiterate the important role of International Civil Servants. FICSA would therefore like to take this opportunity to congratulate our colleagues from the World Food Program on being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. The fact that the invaluable work of staff in yet another UN organization has been honored at this critical time by one of the world's most venerable institutions bears testimony to the firm belief and trust in the role of the UN Organizations and its Specialized Agencies.

On a personal note, I am honored to join you all for the first time and hope to continue to build on the good working relationship enjoyed by my distinguished predecessors. This year has not been anything like I thought it would be when I left our FICSA Council in February. It has been frustrating not to have been personally able to participate until now on behalf of our members in the important work of the Commission to set our terms and conditions of employment. During this year, it has been apparent to us in FICSA and all other stakeholders that it is imperative that we have a fully functioning ICSC, irrespective of the circumstances in which we find ourselves. As such, it is incumbent on all of us to ensure that the work of the Commission on behalf of our staff is uninterrupted, despite the current Global situation and likely medium-to-long-term future. Going forward, FICSA calls on the Commission to adapt ways of working that accommodate our new reality based on demonstrated best practice including formal and informal virtual meetings to facilitate the work of the Commission, both during and between sessions.

As we take up the review of the implementation of the Contractual Framework and the impact it will have on organizations and our staff, we hope that that you will agree that now, more than ever, staff need to focus fully on their jobs without having to spend time on quests for subsequent assignments or worrying about their future. The net result would be, in our opinion, increased productivity and greater efficiency to the benefit of the people we serve. We would also like to underline that FICSA strongly believes that all of us participating in this meeting, are responsible for ensuring that the international civil service remains neutral and independent. We are also responsible for ensuring that the conditions of service allow for the recruitment and retention of staff with the highest standards of competence, efficiency and integrity. We call on all stakeholders to keep those principles in mind during deliberations.

FICSA continues to be very concerned about the conditions of employment and compensation of staff in both field and headquarter duty stations and hopes that the long outstanding review of the post-adjustment methodology and operational rules could be

finalized so as to have a transparent, accurate, stable, predictable and unified compensation system.

FICSA calls for urgent attention by the Commission, as the agreed, independent technical body of the Common System, to facilitate a solution to the issues that led to the implementation of different post adjustment multipliers in common system organizations within the same duty station. FICSA is seriously concerned about the negative implications this situation may have on the entire UN Common System. If not resolved, at the very least organizations may lose their ability to attract and retain the best staff due to competition amongst common system organizations in the same duty station.

Mr Chairman, as we are all aware, the conditions of employment and compensation for our locally recruited colleagues are interrelated with the conditions applicable in the local labor market. Around the globe, workers from all walks of life have been affected by this pandemic, not only in terms of health and well-being, but also in terms of the continuing hugely negative financial impact on the world economy. With this in mind, we fear that any salary data collected in the context of GS salary surveys during this period would be distorted and would have negative consequences in times when the cost of living is rapidly increasing and there are often extreme and unpredictable fluctuations in exchange rates and inflation. Therefore, FICSA urges the Commission and UNOHRM to continue with the current arrangements which suspend all outstanding salary surveys and implement special measures or mechanisms to adjust salaries until the review of the methodology has been finalized and the economic conditions have “normalized” before going ahead with salary surveys in those duty stations.

As a member of the Implementation Board for the UN System-wide Strategy on Mental Health and Wellbeing, it would be remiss of me not to highlight that the UN System is marking Mental Health Month during the month of October. FICSA is delighted to note the recent vocal support from yourself, Mr. Chairman, to the work within the common system that supports staff mental health and wellbeing. We have been an active member of this group since the inception of the MHSWG which is also supported by the HLCM and by our sister Federations. I call upon the members of the Commission to please indulge my optimistic nature which allows me to hope, despite the difficulties 2020 has brought to many of us, that we will see the spirit of the verbal support for the mental health and wellbeing of our 100,000+ staff worldwide concretely reflected as we collectively consider the impact of final recommendations and decisions of this Commission.

Finally, I would like to note that while obviously each Federation has its own perspective on each of the issues up for discussion, we would like to highlight that FICSA has been working closely with our sister Federations in preparation for this session and, in principle, our statements and comments during the coming days should be seen as complementary to each other.

Thank you for your attention

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