

# FICSA E- LEARNING PLATFORM

## CLASSIFICATION OF UN HARDSHIP DUTY-STATIONS

### WHAT IS IT ?



FOR FICSA MEMBERS

# Presentation outline

- Background
- Importance of this exercise for UN staff working away from HQs
- Reflecting on the exercise

# Background

- ▶ This is an annual exercise conducted by the ICSC, per region, to review a list of duty stations situated in a specific region.
- ▶ All duty stations are reviewed on a mandatory basis once in a three-year period. The regions reviewed are:
  - (a) Africa;
  - (b) Asia and the Pacific;
  - (c) Latin America, the Middle East and Eastern Europe/Commonwealth of Independent States.
- ▶ Duty stations where security conditions pose risks are reviewed annually and are monitored by UNDSS.

# Background

- These duty stations are part of the mandatory annual exercise that triggers the payment or not of the hardship allowance.
- The hardship allowance is paid for assignments at “B”, “C”, “D” and “E” duty stations;
- There is no hardship allowance at locations designated as a headquarters (“H”) or “A” duty station.
- The hardship allowance varies according to the category of the duty station, as well as staff member’s grade.

# Definition of hardship:

- Definition of hardship: circumstances and living conditions that pose on-going discomfort, deprivation and difficulties;
- Reflect the evolution of the UN common system having to operate in more risky, insecure and very remote locations with limited infrastructure;
- Duty of Care of UN organizations: responsibility to inform accurately of the actual conditions of living before deploying staff away from HQs.

# Categories (A to E)

- Categories (A to E) are the results of an assessment of the overall conditions of life and work. In determining the degree of hardship, consideration is given to local conditions of safety and security (SECU), health care (HEA), housing (HOU), climate (CLI), isolation (ISO) and level of amenities/conveniences of life (LOC).
- This is assessed by rating the individual factors based on the information provided in the hardship questionnaires, filled out locally by UN staff, and approved by the Resident Coordinator or Resident Representative.
- The analysis of the data contained in the questionnaires forms the foundation of the hardship review. Questionnaires are therefore vital to the operation and constitute the credibility, of the whole scheme.

# Under Housing (HOU) & Isolation (ISO)

- What it is? Adequate housing? proper water or electricity or sanitation systems locally available? availability or not of the basic amenities of life for an acceptable standard of living for staff and their families? level of general hygiene in the duty station ? quality of the running water? reliability of the electricity? public transportation available?
- Under ISO, what it is? Levels of isolation, reliable or not internet connections ? International or national flights connections ? entry or residency status of the family members ?

## Level of amenities/conveniences of life (LOC)

- What it is? decent food distribution systems? sanitation systems available? road infrastructures, etc. Availability or not of the basic amenities of life for an acceptable standard of living for staff and their families. Local recreation facilities easily accessible? local population speaking only the local language? communicating in English? local airport far? Easily accessible?, etc.
- The education grant travel (EGT) was removed from the education grant scheme; therefore the education factor (EDU), i.e. presence or not of an internationally recognized school in Eng and Fr. languages, is no longer reflected in the questionnaires.
- Therefore, UN staff need to expand, under LOC, about the school system available or not in the duty station.



## Under Climate (CLI)

- What it is? Assessment of climate is based on quantitative assessment obtained from reputable sources, containing data on climatic and environmental factors and qualitative assessments to better assess the impacts of climate and environmental factors on the life at the duty station.
- Under that factor, it is also good for UN staff based in the duty station to provide as much as real-life information as possible in terms of, for instance, air pollution, real temperatures and mitigation measures, significant natural disasters, extreme pollution episodes, etc.

# Under Health Care (HEA)

- What it is? proper hospitals available? specialists care? Access to these specialists? General poor health infrastructure? What type of health facilities are available.
- The Health questionnaires need to be filled out either by the designated WHO doctor or the UN designated doctor. But when submitting the final questionnaires to the ICSC, it is good to share the experiences of UN staff on-site in terms of access to health facilities and to health care in general.

# Importance of this exercise

- In many countries, when the Embassies personnel are evacuated, the UN must continue to deliver its work.
- Therefore, UN Staff members, deployed in difficult duty stations, need to know the right level of hardship of a duty station.
- Need to assess the local health facilities to alleviate the impacts of stress on a daily basis on UN Staff members.

# Importance of this exercise

- It is important to put in place more resources in terms of wellness premiums, proper medical and psychological care, and assessments of the psycho-social impacts of a deployment.
- There should be deployment briefings to communicate to staff what the actual conditions are on-site and if the duty station is appropriate for families.
- The UN S/M need to be informed about the real hardship levels, in particular when the data on the local health system is not easily available.

# Importance of this exercise.

- When a duty station, with a rather large UN community, is part of the annual hardship classification exercise, there should be a committee established locally comprising of representatives of all UN agencies in the duty station, like when there is a cost-of-living survey organized locally.
- This will allow for the maximum information to be provided to the ICSC through the questionnaires (pictures of the local conditions of living and extra comments in the questionnaires are always very welcome!)

# Importance of this exercise

- More training is necessary, especially to the Country Team (CT) or the Resident Coordinators (RCs) and to better guide staff in the field in completing the questionnaires and in informing about the importance of this process.
- Resources used for the review of these duty stations (including the work of the ICSC Sec., the CT, the UN Medical Services, UNDSS, the UN orgs and the Staff Feds) could be utilized for increased follow up and guidance where hardship is a significant factor.

# Reflecting on the exercise

- If we are serious about duty-of-care, for FICSA, it is important to continue pushing for a systematic assessment of the other factors in the classification of the hardship levels (HOU, HEA, EDU, ISO, LOC) so that the difficult duty stations can be classified properly.
- This would allow the UN Staff Member to make an informed choice.

THANK YOU !