

## REPORT OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON CONDITIONS OF SERVICE IN THE FIELD

Chair	Amani El-Sheikh (UNESCO Cairo)
Vice-Chair	Cosimo Melpignano (UNGSC Brindisi)
Rapporteur	Véronique Allain (SCBD Montreal)
FICSA President	Diab El-Tabari (UNRWA/ASA Beirut)
FICSA Treasurer	Irwan Shahrezza Mohd Razali (WHO/GSC Kuala Lumpur)
Members, FICSA Executive Committee	Gaston Jordan (ICAO Montreal) Jason Sigurdson (Washington DC)
Regional Representative	Jesus García Jimenez (ITC/ILO Turin)

### Participants

AP-in-FAO	Roberto Bonafede
ICAO	Anthony Ndinguri
IFAD	Dave Nolan
UNGSC	Cosimo Lunedi
WHO/AFRO Brazzaville	Lydie Gassackys Lusamba Kabamba
WHO/EMRO Cairo	Ata Nour Nasr El-Sottohy
WHO/EURO Copenhagen	Kay Miller
WHO/GSC Kuala Lumpur	Kiranjeet Kaur
WHO/SEARO New Delhi	Ritesh Singh
WHO/WPRO Manila	Jed Yparraguirre

### **Federations with observer status**

FUNSA Guinea

Lucie Gnongo Beavogui

### **Guest**

CCISUA

Catherine Comte Tiberghien

### **Adoption of the agenda (Agenda item 1)**

1. Adoption of the agenda
2. Election of the rapporteur
3. Review of the compensation package for Professional staff deployed in the field and its potential and upcoming impact on UN staff deployed in the field
4. Update on the HLCM Duty of Care Working Group
5. 26th session of IASMN (June 2017) and feedback for the FICSA Council
6. 2017 Annual Review of hardship duty stations (Africa Region)
7. Report on the review of the methodology for classification of duty stations
8. Devaluation of local currencies (FICSA/C/71/FIELD/CRP.2)
9. Report on the review of the methodology for the calculation of danger pay
10. Other business
11. Nomination of Standing Committee officers and core group members

### **Election of the rapporteur (Agenda item 2)**

1. Ms Véronique Allain (SCBD) was elected rapporteur.

### **Review of the compensation package for Professional staff and its potential and upcoming impact on UN staff deployed in the field (Agenda item 3)**

2. At the 70<sup>th</sup> FICSA Council, the Executive Committee was asked to prepare a table showing the adverse changes of the new compensation package for field staff following the review of the compensation package for Professional staff. One of the two Members for Compensation Issues gave a presentation on the topic referring to document FICSA/C/71/PSA/1, listing the changes and the possible adverse impact of the different components in the compensation package. Of particular relevance for field-based UN staff were the changes introduced at the level of the hardship allowance, which had been replaced by a unified rate regardless of dependency status, based on grade brackets. The non-family service allowance, payable only in non-family duty stations, through two flat rates independent of grade levels, was reported to have a particularly major impact on the D-1s and above, who would lose about USD 3,000 per year.

2. As for the introduction of a single unified salary scale, it was explained that a staff member with a dependent spouse would receive a 6 per cent dependency allowance and a staff member currently on a dependent rate with respect to the first child would receive an allowance of 6 per cent of net remuneration, which would be reduced by 1 per cent every year, until it reached the amount of the child allowance. The members of the Standing Committee were informed that one

of the adverse impacts of the new salary scale would be that a staff member in sole receipt of a child allowance would be affected.

3. As for the education grant for the school year in progress on 1 January 2018, a new system based on a global reimbursement ceiling had been introduced, with declining percentage levels. The lower claims would be receiving higher percentage reimbursements. The main adverse effects were related to the fees listed as “accessory services”. Some of those fees might be considered admissible under “tuition” or related to “capital assessment” and reimbursed separately, depending on the organizations and on the country in which the duty station is based.

4. Several members of the Standing Committee expressed concern over the fact that a number of organizations had still not worked on drawing up proper new guidelines and administrative instructions, in particular pertaining to the education grant. It was reported that a number of UN organizations would now be treating the Capital Assessment Fees (CAF) differently and that could have a negative impact if they were implemented retroactively. In some countries where headquarters organizations were based, the new listing of accessory services was reported to allow more room for interpretation of the new rules.

5. As for boarding and related expenses, the entitlement would be limited only to staff serving in field locations (A to E duty stations) whose children were attending primary and secondary education outside the duty station, while no boarding expenses would be paid in respect of children attending tertiary education. When payable, boarding assistance would be provided as a lump-sum amount of USD 5,000. Staff members based at headquarters duty stations will no longer be eligible for boarding. It was reported that the major adverse impact of the new rule was that the amount of USD 5,000 was way too low and this new rule would severely constrain mobility within the UN of many international Professional staff with children of school age.

**The Standing Committee recommends that the Executive Committee undertake a survey among the members of the Federation on the overall implementation of the new education grant.**

**The Standing Committee recommends that the Executive Committee work in collaboration with the Standing Committee on Professional Salaries and Allowances on monitoring closely the adverse effects of the new education grant scheme for staff working in the field. It also recommended that the Executive Committee call upon the membership of FICSA to appeal against the manner in which the package had been implemented to date, in particular the provisions pertaining to the new education grant.**

#### **Update on the HLCM Duty of Care Working Group (Agenda item 4)**

6. The Member of the Executive Committee without portfolio provided an update on the participation of the Federation in the HLCM Working Group on Duty of Care<sup>1</sup> for UN personnel operating in high-risk environments. A continuing focus on the following items was called for:

- Need for clear management standards and accountability mechanisms whereby UN staff knew what to expect from their organizations and managers knew what support they were

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<sup>1</sup> Duty of care is the obligation that UN organizations have to look after the well-being of their staff in all duty stations.

expected to provide. Member States had to ensure that an appropriate duty of care standard was properly funded;

- "Non-negotiable"/mandatory actions across agencies, including pre-deployment orientation and support as well as post-assignment debriefings and access to psychosocial support, especially for staff deployed to high-risk environments;
- Better protection of locally-recruited staff and recognition of risks and hardships they might face in their service to the organization in high-risk or fragile operational environments;
- The need for increased investment in services for staff, especially in relation to counselling and mental health;
- The opportunity to build on UN Cares as a peer education and support mechanism for staff health/wellbeing; and
- Diversity and inclusive approaches that met the organization's duty of care towards all UN personnel (including women; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBT) colleagues; staff with disabilities; and ethnic and religious minorities).

7. To help the UN walk the talk in terms of "leaving no one behind," participants discussed the importance of finding a new institutional home for the UN for All project. At present, there was no activity funding foreseen for the project under UN Cares. Discussions were ongoing within a few organizations. FICSA member associations/unions were encouraged to take up the issue with their respective management counterparts, with a view to enlisting support for activities to promote an inclusive working environment free of discrimination in all duty stations.

8. Member organizations of FICSA shared the concern of certain staff members coming from a minority religious group, who had requested accommodation in order to attend religious celebrations and rituals that fall on a normal working day in the duty station. Management and security officials had taken a position that there were security concerns preventing them from granting flexibility. That view was not shared by the staff concerned, and they felt that the measures were unreasonable and discriminatory.

**The Standing Committee recommends that the Executive Committee follow up with organisations and UNDSS and advocate strongly for promoting diversity and inclusion and ensuring zero discrimination in the workplace.**

**The Standing Committee also recommends that the Executive Committee promote the "UN for all" training programme of UN Cares and support efforts to organize training sessions for interested FICSA members and other UN entities in Egypt and beyond.**

#### **26th session of IASMN (June 2017) and feedback for the FICSA Council (agenda item 5)**

9. The 26th session of the IASMN was held from 20 to 22 June 2017 in Montreux, Switzerland, and discussed the following agenda items:

- Amendments to the implementation of the new security risk management policy;
- Abolishment of the minimum operating security standards (MOSS);
- Changes to the policy relative to the locally cost-shared security budget;
- Establishment of an implementation working group concerning the road safety strategy;
- New guidelines on security crisis management;
- Additional work on the first responder guidelines;

- Implementation of the recommendations in the residential security report;
- Gender issues;
- Expansion of the IASMN Steering Group to 15 members;
- Creation of a working group for purposes of funding mechanisms for security; and
- Global identity management.

10. Those highly technical security discussions needed to be followed up closely and staff representatives were encouraged to advocate with their own organizations on the need to emphasize priorities for ensuring safety and security for staff in all locations and managing security risks and vulnerabilities related to their organization activities.

**The Standing Committee recommends that the Executive Committee continue to participate actively in the bi-annual IASMN deliberations.**

### **2017 Annual Review of hardship duty stations (Africa Region) (Agenda 6)**

11. The Member of the Executive Committee for Field and Regional Issues introduced the agenda item referring to the document FICSA/CIRC/1282 containing the report of attendance of FICSA at the annual exercise of classification of hardship duty stations located in the Africa Region. It listed of 323 duty stations with an improved response rate of 91 per cent of questionnaires submitted to the duty stations, thus providing complete sets of information. By comparison, during the 2014 annual review dedicated to the Africa region, the ICSC only received replies from 54 per cent of the duty stations. The classification of hardship duty stations in Africa offered an opportunity to test a model emanating from the review of the methodology aimed at reassessing the weighting of the different factors, such as isolation, local conditions and housing.

**The Standing Committee recommends that the Executive Committee continue participating actively in the ICSC regular meetings devoted to the classification of hardship duty stations, stressing the importance of other sub-factors such as health, isolation, local conditions and housing on a par with the security assessments.**

### **Report on the review of the methodology for classification of duty stations (Agenda item 7)**

12. The Member of the Executive Committee for Field and Regional Issues informed the participants in the sub-committee that, in recent years, the ICSC tri-partite working group had raised the issue of the classification methodology and the weight assumed by security and health, whereas other factors such as isolation, local conditions, housing and climate also had an impact on the conditions of life and work of UN staff deployed in the field. In particular the wide range of A duty stations was flagged, especially for duty stations where security was not a major concern but other factors were. The ICSC 86<sup>th</sup> session in March 2018 would be discussing the recommended model which provided more consistency across factors and overall categorizations and would have the merit of increasing confidence in the overall scheme. Reference was made to an information document posted on the FICSA website.

**The Standing Committee recommends that the Executive Committee participate actively in the upcoming ICSC spring session and advocate for a classification methodology that would better reflect the situation on the ground in terms of the actual living and working conditions and be**

easier to explain to staff, thereby facilitating the implementation of the duty of care.

### Devaluation of local currencies (Agenda item 8)

13. The President of the Federation reported that the devaluation of local currencies affected not only the salaries of active staff members, but also the take-home pension payments of retirees. The review of the methodologies for salary surveys for locally recruited staff would need to address that issue and provide concrete solutions in a list of special measures.

14. During the discussions, the need for training on salary surveys under Methodology II, in particular in Africa, was highlighted and FICSA was asked to facilitate trainings through its Regional Representative for Africa.

**The Standing Committee recommends that the Executive Committee work closely with the UN Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM) and the UN Joint Staff Pension Fund (UNJSPF) with a view to securing the introduction of an improved mechanism for addressing the negative impact of high inflation and currency devaluations on salaries and pensions.**

**The Standing Committee recommends that the Executive Committee support and facilitate the organization of training sessions on salary surveys under Methodology II, in both French and English: Conakry (Guinea), Yaoundé (Cameroon) and Nairobi (Kenya).**

### Report on the review of the methodology for the calculation of danger pay (Agenda item 9)

15. The Member of the Executive Committee for Field and Regional Issues gave a short presentation (available on the FICSA website) recalling the basic principles of the application of danger pay in (i) locations where very dangerous conditions prevail; (ii) duty stations where the UN staff or premises are clearly, persistently and directly targeted, thus presenting an imminent and constant threat to staff and activities; (iii) duty stations where UN staff or premises are at high risk of suffering collateral damage in a war or active armed conflict; and (iv) duty stations where medical staff are specifically at risk when deployed to deal with public health emergencies as declared by the World Health Organization.

16. It was explained that the danger pay is calculated differently for internationally recruited Professional staff compared to locally recruited staff. Several participants reported differences in treatment between the international Professional staff and the locally recruited staff when an official evacuation was decided.

**The Standing Committee recommended that the Executive Committee advocate for further improvement in the provision of danger pay to locally recruited staff serving in high-risk locations. In all situations where the conditions prevailing in a duty station were equally dangerous for both internationally and locally recruited staff members, the compensation for 'danger' should be the same for all staff.**

### Other business (Agenda item 10)

17. Taking into consideration the diverse political contexts and the instability of some regions

in the Middle East, and for FICSA to be more effective in representing its membership, it was suggested to introduce to the Council the possibility of adding a region to the geographical scope of work for FICSA: the Middle East Region. It was thus recommended that an informal network of FICSA members, based in that region, start liaising actively with the Executive Committee through its Member for Field and Regional Issues.

**The Standing Committee recommended that the Executive Committee, in consultation with the Standing Committee on Legal Questions, look into the feasibility of revising the definition of regions and report to the FICSA Council at its 72<sup>nd</sup> session in 2019.**

18. The creation of a FUNSA in Nairobi was discussed and encouraged under the guidance of the FICSA Secretariat to allow for better representation of the FICSA membership in that part of Africa. The Nairobi-based staff representative of ICAO would act as the focal point.

**The Standing Committee recommended that the Executive Committee actively support the creation of a FUNSA in Nairobi.**

#### **Nomination of Standing Committee officers and core group members (Agenda item 11)**

19. The Standing Committee nominated Ms. Amani El-Sheikh (UNESCO Cairo) as Chair and Mr Cosimo Melpignano (UNGSC Brindisi) as Vice-Chair.

20. The core group would comprise all those who had attended the meetings of the Standing Committee except Ms. Kay Miller (WHO/EURO Copenhagen).

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