FICSA COUNCIL

73rd SESSION

London,8 to 14 February 2020

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FICSA/C/73/FIELD/R.1   London, 14 February 2020

Agenda item 11(d)

Report of the Standing Committee on Conditions in the Field

Officers

Chair	Cosimo Melpignano (UNGSC)
Vice-Chair	Vito Musa (UNGSC)
Rapporteur	Véronique Allain (SCBD)
Members, FICSA Executive Committee	Diab El-Tabari (UNRWA/ASA)
FICSA Regional Representative	Anthony Ndinguri (ICAO)

Participants

AP-in-FAO	Line Kaspersen
FAO/WFP-UGSS	Eva Moller, Luca Vecchia
IFAD	Lixia Yang
IMO	Ivana Goode, Elene Sarria
UNAIDS	Andrea Palazzi
UNGSC	Cosimo Melpignano
UNIDO	Steven Eales
WHO/AFRO	Hamidou Bague
WHO/EURO	Sanid Vlajic
WHO/WPRO	Priya Mannava

Guest

WMU	Anne Pazaver

Adoption of the agenda (agenda item 1)

1. The Standing Committee approved the following agenda:
    1. Adoption of the agenda

2. Election of the rapporteur
3. Feedback on IASMN session in June 2019 ([FICSA/C/73/Field/Summary Sheet 3](#)) – *Véronique Allain, Field Issues*
4. Update on the annual ICSC meeting to review the classification of hardship duty stations for Asia and the Pacific Region ([FICSA/C/73/Field/Summary Sheet 4](#)) – *Véronique Allain, Field Issues*
5. Rules and regulations in the UN common system concerning carrying of arms by security guards ([FICSA/C/73/Field/Summary Sheet 5](#)) – *Eva Moller*
6. Workshops and other business
7. Nomination of Standing Committee officers and core group members

Election of the rapporteur (agenda item 2)

2.   Véronique Allain (SCBD) was appointed as rapporteur.

Feedback on IASMN session in June 2019 (agenda item 3)

3.   The Executive Committee Member for Field and Regional Issues introduced this agenda item by explaining to the participants that the Inter-Agency Security Management Network (IASMN) is a network which supports the High-Level Committee on Management (HLCM) in the reviews of policies and resources related to the entire United Nations (UN) Security Management System (UNSMS). IASMN's work was highly technical and its discussions focused on the security and safety of UN staff. The realignment efforts of the United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) in the context of changing security environments and the increasing demands made of it, were briefly described. The UN was becoming an easy target as a result of more situations of civil unrest and nationalistic movements. Nevertheless, the deployment of the UN workforce in these countries needed to continue despite the more difficult circumstances.

4.   One of IASMN's projects, the Security-related Technology, Telecommunications Security Standards (TESS) project, had been mandated by UNDSS and facilitated by the World Food Programme to build a new business model for security telecommunications at the level of connectivity, applications and procedures. In practical terms, this meant fixing issues with the current security communication technologies that actively supported the UNSMS entities in the field and standardizing these technologies while focusing on three technical areas: the VHF radio systems, vehicle tracking systems and mobile satellite systems.

5.   Finally, three different safety policies had been officially launched and implemented in 2019.

- The Road Safety Strategy, as part of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, committed all UN organizations to reduce the number of road traffic crashes and associated losses involving UN personnel and vehicles.

- The policy on commercial air travel for staff of the UNSMS provided a framework for

taking due consideration of aviation safety factors when selecting commercial air operators (including UN chartered flights and donated flights) for official travel of these Staff when serving in very challenging environments and difficult conditions.

- The policy on chemical, biological, radioactive and nuclear threats and attacks was meant to minimize the risks for the UNSMS staff when such threats would arise.

> **The Standing Committee on Conditions of service in the Field recommended that the FICSA Executive Committee should continue participating actively in the meetings and deliberations of IASMN with a view to raise issues of common interest and concern that may be brought up by the FICSA membership.**

Update on the annual ICSC meeting to review the classification of hardship duty stations for Asia and the Pacific Region (agenda item 4)

6.   The Executive Committee Member for Field and Regional Issues introduced this agenda item by explaining the work carried out by the Tripartite Working Group (TWG) – which is composed of representatives from the ICSC Secretariat, the UN organizations and the Staff Federations – when it met in November 2019 to review the classification of hardship duty stations according to the conditions of work and life. Then followed an extensive debate on the revision of the methodology to classify hardship duty stations. The difficult topic of designating non-family duty stations, based on factors (such as local conditions) that might receive more consideration today than in the past, raised the interest of participating members. The designation of non-family duty stations was currently based only on family restrictions for reasons of safety and security. The 72nd FICSA Council had noted that issues such as limited medical services, non-availability of housing, isolation of family members in the duty station or availability of goods and services would be included to better capture the level of hardship of a given duty station. It was therefore confirmed that the revised methodology properly incorporated the local elements as underlined above.

7.   The current session of the Standing Committee raised further elements that should be fundamental in establishing the categorization of a duty station. For instance, pollution in the locality, respect for gender and sexual diversity or disparity in the conditions of service would now be essential for the wellbeing of both internationally and locally recruited staff.

8.   The debate also underlined the importance of TWG fact-finding missions; when feasible and financially viable, these had proved to be very useful in the better consideration of the needs of UN staff deployed in the field. A very detailed questionnaire, shared among the UN community in each duty station, was used to collect relevant information.

9.   More than ever, TWG's work had proved its importance and relevance for the UN as a whole, in helping UN organizations fulfil their duty of care: they had the mandatory role to inform their staff of the exact conditions of deployment. Member States had recently paid

more attention to this classification process; it was hoped that TWG's integrity would maintained to ensure the wellbeing of UN staff.

10.   In addition, the participation of staff and the administration (Resident Coordinator (RC) or Resident Representative (ResRep) or Designated Officer (DO)) in the classification process was fundamental, as this affected not only the entitlements under the hardship and mobility scheme but also on the daily conditions of living of locally recruited staff. It was suggested that staff be given information to raise their awareness about the importance of this exercise and correct completion of the questionnaire. Accurate and up-to-date information provided in questionnaire responses helped to reach a proper classification depicting the actual conditions of life and work in a duty station.

> **The Standing Committee recommended that the FICSA Executive Committee continue advocating staff interest during the regular ICSC meetings devoted to the classification of hardship duty stations.**
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> **The Standing Committee recommended that the Executive Committee ensure that the next round of ICSC classification of hardship duty stations duly considered factors such as the level of pollution and corresponding mitigation measures, respect for sexual diversity and disparity in the conditions of service.**
>
> **The Standing Committee recommended that the Executive Committee put in place an information process (such as an e-platform) to provide timely information to the FICSA membership affected by future classification reviews, to raise awareness among the local UN community of the importance of providing the right responses to questionnaires to ensure proper classification.**

Rules and regulations in the UN common system concerning carrying of arms by security guards (agenda item 5)

11.   The representative from FAO-UGSS noted that security guards at FAO HQ premises were requested to carry firearms, even though that had not been a specific requirement during their hiring process. Security services in UN agencies operated under strict rules and regulations. Ranks carried more weight in that service than in the overall hierarchies in the UN, as security guards needed to be fully aware of the line of reporting in the event of emergencies. Grades were thus closely connected to responsibilities.

12.   At FAO, most guards were hired at both the G2 and G3 levels, and their supervisors had invited them to carry firearms, without this invitation being reflected in their job descriptions. Several FAO security staff members had wondered about the appropriateness of that, as they felt obliged to volunteer to carry firearms, while recognizing that that was a greater responsibility that was currently not based on their grade. That discussion led them to question their current job classification. The issue was multifaceted and touched on both job classification and the introduction of a hazardous duty allowance.

13.   The Standing Committee had no specific knowledge of the issue and felt that the question deserved a comprehensive study on existing UN common-system rules on grade levels and responsibilities, or the special salary indemnities for those guards carrying arms.

> **The Standing Committee recommended that the FICSA Executive Committee ask UNDSS for guidelines on the roles and responsibilities of armed guards, the potential for special indemnities and the minimum requirements to carry a firearm, ensuring the highest level of security.**
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> **The Standing Committee recommended also that the FICSA Executive Committee write to the IASMN for further guidance on this matter.**

Workshops and other business (agenda item 6)

14.   The Standing Committee suggested that FICSA explore the possibility to create a dedicated webpage and an e-learning platform, specifically targeted to the membership deployed away from headquarters, for the benefit of newly appointed staff representatives. This would help raise awareness of the role of staff representatives, and give them the tools to advocate better conditions of life and work, depending on the duty station and the country of operations.

15.   In this regard, it was suggested that the Membership of the Federation with staff deployed in the field provide to the FICSA Secretariat a list of the countries from which they operate, in order for the Standing Committee to improve the communication flow and its responsiveness.

Nomination of Standing Committee officers and core group members (agenda item 7)

16.   The following delegates were nominated as Standing Committee officers:

- Cosimo Melpignano (UNGSC) as Chair
- Vito Musa (UNGSC) as Vice-Chair
- Line Kaspersen (AP-in-FAO) as Vice-Chair

17.   The following participants in the SC were nominated as members of the core group:

Véronique Allain (SCBD)
Anthony Ndinguri (ICAO)
Diab El-Tabari (UNRWA/ASA)
Jesus García Jiménez (ILO ITC)
Rajesh Mehta (WHO/SEARO)
Luca Vecchia (UGSS)
Ny You (FAO)
Lixia Yang (IFAD)

Ivana Goode, Elene Sarria (IMO)
Andrea Palazzi (UNAIDS)
Steven Eales (UNIDO)
Hamidou Bague (WHO-AFRO)
Sanid Vlajic (WHO EURO)
Priya Mannava (WHO WPRO)

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