

REPORT OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON STAFF–MANAGEMENT RELATIONS

Introduction

1. The Standing Committee on Staff–Management Relations (SMR - see Appendix 1 for the list of participants) met on 24 January (virtual session) and 7 February 2023 (hybrid session), where it elected Anita Stefin (WHO/EURO) as Rapporteur and addressed its agenda. SMR also held a joint session on 8 February with the Standing Committee on Human Resources Management (HRM) and Professional Salaries and Allowances (PSA) to discuss policies on overtime.

Activities in 2022

2. SMR discussed the actions taken to implement the [decisions of the 75th session of the FICSA Council](#), noting that all had been completed except that the survey of organizations' actions, mechanisms, processes and best practices in addressing any kind of harassment (decision FICSA/C/75/D/29) had been postponed to 2023.

Imbalance in the management of overtime across organizations

3. PSA, HRM and SMR discussed UN organizations' various policies on overtime. The resulting recommendations appear in HRM's report and the report of the 76th session of the FICSA Council. The SMR core group would analyse all the policies collected and discuss them at the 2023 Council session.

Collaboration with management on policies dealing with whistleblowing, bullying, abuse of authority and fear of retaliation.

4. As mentioned, the implementation of decision FICSA/C/75/D/29 had been postponed. The breadth of the subject (actions, mechanisms, processes, and best practices in addressing any kind of harassment) had made the proposed survey difficult to prepare and launch. SMR therefore considered what steps should be taken next. Members agreed that that the subject was too important to abandon. They shared their experience with, for example, holding regular meetings with senior management, to address and discuss the various forms of misconduct and harassment.

5. SMR proposed to form a joint working group with the Standing Committee on Social Security/Occupational Health and Safety (SOCSEC) that would address concerns about misconduct and harassment at workplace and improving the mental health and well-being of staff. It would aim to create a matrix that would support staff representatives/well-being ambassadors in advising staff seeking advice on those concerns and to produce an advocacy toolkit on how best to address those issues with management of their organizations. SMR proposed to hold a session with the FISCA ExCom after the matrix/toolkit was developed to discuss further steps that could be taken before the 77th Council session.

Arrangements on release time for representatives of staff associations/unions

6. Staff Representatives should be granted reasonable official release time to enable them to carry out their functions efficiently, while avoiding detriment to their main roles. Having a memorandum of understanding (MoU) or recognition agreement in place ensured official recognition of the relationships, responsibilities, commitments, obligations, rights and means of cooperation and financial support between the staff association/union and the organization. That might prove challenging in the absence of a signed MOU.
7. Despite the existing formula established in UN Secretariat administrative instruction [ST/AI/293](#) and UN General Assembly document [A/C.5/50/64](#) (release of 50% for the chair, 30% for the vice-chair and 10-16 hours for rest of committee members in HQ duty stations (with 1,000 or more staff), implementation appeared to vary widely among organizations, in both total time released and its distribution among Staff Representatives, either as a full-time release and/or a reduction in the percentage of normal work time.
8. The lack of an established release time negatively affected the work–life balance and mental health of Staff Representatives. They often used personal time to perform the work of the staff committee. That contradicts the basic principle of the functions being official and benevolent, and can hinder the recruitment of prospective Staff Representatives.
9. Discussing the Joint Inspection Unit report [Staff–Management relations in the United Nations specialized agencies and common system](#), the UN Secretary-General’s note on staff–management relations ([A/67/136/Add.1](#)) quotes recommendation 3:
Once an agreement has been reached in the SMC on fair and harmonized criteria for determining facilities and release for performing staff representation functions, the Secretary-General and the Executive Heads of the separately administered organs should issue revised administrative issuances in this regard; until then, [ST/AI/293](#) and [A/C.5/50/64](#), should be fully implemented and considered as minimal provisions.
10. Delegates shared the arrangements in their respective organizations for time release and agreed on a need for a concrete time release, with actual reduction of regular duties, as often the time provided might be sufficient for attending the staff committee meetings but not enough to study documentation or to learn about topics of interest.

Recommendation

11. **SMR recommended that staff-associations/unions should pursue establishment of concrete release time for staff representatives through memoranda of understanding (MOUs) or other formal agreements with their managements. The FISCA Executive Committee should continue collecting**

such MoUs from its membership, as well as monitoring developments related to the amendments of UN Secretariat administrative instruction [ST/AI/293](#) related to Staff Representatives' release time as discussed by the UN Secretary General ([A/67/136/Add.1](#)).

Role, operation, responsibilities, impartiality, and funding of an ombudsperson

12. While the importance of an ombudsperson within the UN system had been recognized at the highest level, practices might differ, and services might not be fully promoted/applied or even available in some organizations. The 2015 JIU [Report on review of the organizational ombudsman services across the United Nations system \(JIU/REP/2015/6\)](#) made a series of recommendations on the ombudsperson's role and function, responsibilities and duties, funding, provision of services in the field, professionalism and accountability. It stressed that promoting the role of the organization's ombudsperson is the joint responsibility of the ombudsperson, management, and the staff association/union.
13. SMR members shared their experience with ombudspersons, which ranged from the positive to negative. While some had been involved in the recruitment process and had a full-time person in the position, others reported negative experience with an ombudsperson, not being involved in the recruitment process or the position being left vacant. Some organizations had no position for an ombudsperson.

Recommendation

14. **The FICSA Executive Committee should issue a communication to all members that urges Staff Representatives to become familiar with the Joint Inspection Unit [Report on review of the organizational ombudsman services across the United Nations system \(JIU/REP/2015/6\)](#), and advocate the adoption of its recommendations by their managements.**

Latest updates

15. A delegate expressed concerns about the restructuring process in his organization, asking whether other FICSA members could share the lessons learned from similar exercises and provide tips that could help his organization and its staff association in addressing the challenges to the workforce posed by restructuring. The Chair invited staff association representatives to contact the delegate individually to exchange on that matter.

Nomination of officers and core group members

16. The following delegates were nominated as officers:
 - Viera Seben (ICAO) as Chair
 - Shereen Barry (IMO) as Vice-Chair
 - Anita Stefin (WHO/EURO) as Vice-Chair
17. All participants would be invited to join the core group.

Appendix 1. Participants

Officers

Chair	Viera Seben (ICAO)
Vice-Chairs	Shereen Barry (IMO), Annarita Palumbo (UNGSC)
Rapporteur	Anita Stefin (WHO/EURO)
FICSA General Secretary	Cosimo Melpignano
FICSA ExCom member	Line Kaspersen (AP-in-FAO), Tracy Tollmann (UNFCCC)

Staff association/union

AP-in-FAO	Florence Tartanac, Vanda Ferreira Dos Santos
FAO/WFP-UGSS	Luca Vecchia, Mark Brown
IAEA	Anthony Alozie, Maria Mikheieva, Erik Glass
ICAO	Andrew Brown
IMO	Fola Odulana
UNESCO	Federica Delconte, Vivian Zaccaria, Lina Oweis,
UNFCCC	Sarah Klinghammer, Mary Jean Abrazado
UNGSC	Alessandra Marcorio
UPU	Stephane Vuillemin, Silvia Baratech, Franck Landauer
WHO/GSC	Hazim Ahmed, Liana Michael Abdullah
WHO/HQ	Innocent Mugabe, Neddy Mufanga
WHO/SEARO	Kumar Ravinder
WHO/WPRO	Modesto VI Beligan

Members with associate status

CTBTO	Maria Zelda Rojas
CERN	Catherine Regelbrugge

Associations with consultative status

EMBL	Ishssane Iraqi
WIPO	SCFaizan Ul-Haq

Federation with observer status

FUNSA Guinea	Lucie Gnongo Beavogui
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