



Federation of International
Civil Servants' Associations

CIRCULAR

FICSA/CIRC/1383
Ref: UNISERV

Geneva, 14 October 2024

**STATEMENT
DELIVERED BY THE PRESIDENT OF
THE FEDERATION OF INTERNATIONAL CIVIL SERVANTS' ASSOCIATIONS (FICSA)
TO THE UNISERV ANNUAL MEETING**

(International Centre for Theoretical Physics at UNESCO Trieste, Italy, 11 October 2024)

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: Wadzanai Garwe, FICSA President

Dear colleagues,

Before I begin my speech, I would like to take a moment of silence to acknowledge our colleagues in conflict zones and to remember those colleagues we have lost.

On behalf of the FICSA Executive Committee, please let me convey my thanks to all our colleagues at UNISERV, and to the President, Ms Karin Esposito, for inviting us to address your annual meeting.

To put in context why FICSA has been invited to address this forum, the two federations, UNISERV and FICSA signed a formal, bilateral agreement in 2019 which recognized that “the combined strength, resources, skills and experience of the federations will considerably enhance capacity to represent and defend their members’ interests.” In July 2020, the tri-federation agreement between CCISUA, FICSA and UNISERV was signed to reinforce the bilateral commitment and ensure cooperation between the three sister federations.

We need to be super vigilant.

We attended the 98th session of the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) in Rome in July 2024. We were given some insight into the battle we had ahead of us. The member states have asked the commissioners in the three working groups to critically assess our compensation package. We need to be clear that, although it is posited as a Comprehensive Compensation Review for Professional staff, any shared benefits such as those for staff with children with disabilities are also under scrutiny. This means we need to treat it as a review of all staff benefits.

We are truly in an historic moment where we cannot show division or dissension in the ranks as the member states cannot have any point in which they could or should divide and scatter us. The ICSC has analyzed our compensation package and found it to be fit for purpose, meaning that there are no overlaps to our overall benefits.

It is no longer competitive in our view as staff representatives. FICSA does not believe that the compensation package as it currently stands can attract the “Best and the Brightest” in the world and particularly the workforce to serve the most vulnerable in the most difficult and dangerous locations. As part of the global staff survey the top three most attractive aspects of working for the UN were the health and pension benefits at 44 percent of respondents; the salary and post adjustment if applicable at 42 percent and believing strongly in the goals and objectives of the organization at 39 percent. Thus, UN staff have demonstrated that in practical terms we believe in what we do, and we would like to be suitably remunerated for doing what we do and for growing risks (whether it be health, safety and security-related) that many of us take while serving in hardship duty stations.

FICSA is 100% committed to working with both our sister federations to ensure that the UN compensation package is reviewed in a holistic fashion to ensure it is fit for purpose, not only for this generation of staff, but for generations to come. Collectively we are asking for an improvement of the compensation package that adequately and fairly compensates all staff who devote their knowledge and skills to meeting the growing demands of our member states. We stress the importance of including disability and ensuring that diversity and inclusion is incorporated. The member states would like to weaken the tri-partite consultative system put in place through the common system to weaken the package for the civil service. They would like to be less bound by the tripartite ICSC technical working groups and go straight to cutting our compensation package. There are global geo-political pushes for cuts and the push is coming from all directions, not just from a certain group or region. We need to push for the tri-partite consultative system through the ICSC as a technical body to be respected and strengthened by the member states, even as we engage with the ICSC in parallel through the ICSC contact group on the consultative process and working arrangements.

We must be highly strategic and defend our compensation package from a political and psychological level while ensuring that we truly cross our t's and dot our i's – an English expression which means we must be technically very attentive to every minor detail so that there is no room for criticism. The co-chairs of the HR Network requested, of the federations and the ICSC, that we increase the alignment, where possible, between the Organizations and Staff Federations, in our positions. They reiterated this request in a meeting at the ICSC. If there are already areas where we are not aligned, they requested that we initiate a discussion with the Chief Executive Board (CEB), our managers, and the ICSC on how we can strategize around an issue so that we do not damage each other's positions.

It is important to note that the CEB have not disclosed their own position on each item of the compensation package, while at the same time requesting the Staff Federations to share our position. What is clear from the recently concluded High Level Committee on Management meeting is that the UN is facing an unprecedented funding cut and the fourth Industrial Revolution which includes

Artificial Intelligence. The landscape of our work as we know it will change and we need serious risk mitigation strategies for workforce up and reskilling as many jobs may become redundant.

I have focused my speech on the compensation package review because it is the biggest threat to our existence now. It is also an opportunity for us, as staff representatives, to convince the member states whose personnel would be most affected by any cuts, to stand with us. This group is comprised of the G77 in alignment with China and many countries in Asia and Latin America.

Let us use the trust, collaboration, commitment, and combined desire we have as staff federations to ensure that staff are ably represented, advocated for, and acknowledged as the most valuable resource in the United Nations. Let us continue our fight to ensure that our compensation package is maintained and improved upon and not diminished.

Alone FICSA is a drop together we are an ocean!

In solidarity!
