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## **Report from the ICSC Tripartite Working Group meeting established for the mid-year review of field duty stations according to the condition of life and work**

**(Virtual meeting, 9- 11 June 2020)**

*by Véronique Allain (Executive Committee Member for Field and Regional Issues), Cosimo Melpignano (Chair of the Standing Committee for Field issues) and Vito Musa (Co-Chair of the Standing Committee for Field issues)*

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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: Evelyn Kortum, FICSA General Secretary

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The Tripartite Working Group (TWG), composed of representatives from the ICSC Secretariat plus the UN Secretariat and several UN specialized agencies with staff deployed in the Field and the Staff Federations (see Annex II for a detailed list of participants), met virtually to classify **18** field duty stations. These included new and reactivated duty stations that had received a temporary classification (TC) in November 2019, duty stations in transition, and duty stations that have exceptionally been approved by the Chairman for inclusion in the 2020 Mid-Year Review. Duty stations which had to be classified temporarily deploy staff in different UN agencies such as UNHCR, WFP, the UN Secretariat, UNICEF, etc. Classification rating inform staff accurately before their deployment.

To allow for the time difference between New York and Europe, the meeting was held over three half-days, it was well organized and prepared by the ICSC Secretariat. The Chief of Human Resources Policies Division, Mrs. Henrietta De Beer, warned about the impacts of COVID-19 and informed that the questionnaires were sent out before the pandemic; i.e., before the impact of the pandemic could be assessed properly. TWG participants refrained from applying a blanket COVID-

19 hardship rate but rather decided to think about the situation further. Clearly, in countries where the UN is deployed, local living conditions and health system would be particularly affected, without mentioning the repercussions on the overall security and safety that a pandemic could easily trigger.

Therefore, participants agreed to meet again, in an informal virtual setting, before mid-July 2020, to prepare the grounds for the annual review (November 2020) which is to be devoted to the African Region. The WHO, as the specialized agency for health and health-care systems, has confirmed its availability to conduct a good and reliable assessment of the African duty stations, in collaboration with the UN Division for Healthcare Management and Occupational Safety and Health. Representatives of the three Staff Federations will be attending this supplementary meeting scheduled for July 2020. They will advocate for a methodology which is robust enough to capture well the impact of COVID-19. Such an established methodological approach could guide a possible future global review of all field duty stations and ensure an equitable and consistent assessment of the impact of COVID-19 on the hardship factors.

It will be important to keep in mind the rapidly evolving situations in most countries, not just on the health front, but in the economic, social, and political spheres too. Many will be hit rather hard.

The Chairman of the ICSC greeted the participants and confirmed that he had full confidence in the work carried out by the TWG as this is one of the few groups under the umbrella of the ICSC which has been able, over the years, to show a high level of credibility and integrity in its work and mandate. Despite the change in the format to conduct this mid-year meeting, this TWG has proven that it has been operating harmoniously and most of the decisions submitted to the Chairman of the ICSC could easily be rubber-stamped without further discussions.

The meeting was chaired by Mrs. Josiane Sidibe Pimpie, Senior Compensation Specialist from the World Health Organization (WHO). For this meeting, the breakdown of the 18 duty stations under review was as follows:

### 2020 Mid-Year Review: Types of duty stations



The response rate in terms of questionnaire submissions was 83 percent while the overall response rate (including 14 reported inactive) was 90 percent. Of the 18 duty stations, 15 submitted questionnaires and the remaining 3 duty stations were reviewed without a questionnaire.

Please refer to the Annex 1. for the full list of duty stations under review with their final ratings.

### Briefing by the UN Department of Security and Safety (UNDSS)

The TWG was briefed via video by Mr. Igor Mitrokhin, Deputy Director of the UN Department of Security and Safety (UNDSS) who reviewed the **security ratings**. The COVID-19 pandemic and its impact are not under the responsibility of UNDSS and only if conflicts, riots, or unrest incidents would be reported because of the pandemic, UNDSS would be asked to assess the situation in a specific duty station. UNDSS reaffirmed that the security consequences of medical hazards would be assessed. UNDSS mentioned that the UN was having difficulties operating normally and efficiently due to the pandemic.

### Non-family duty stations – Nairobi as special case

The UNDSS representative also seized this opportunity to inform the group about the notion of “family-friendly” duty-stations (not declared non-family duty stations - NFDS) about the security and safety assessments carried out: duty stations rated at the A and B level for security purposes are 100% “family-friendly”. For duty stations rated at the C level, 95% are NFDS but the case of Nairobi is clearly an exception to this rule: good security risk management measures are put in place so that Nairobi, although assessed at the C level for security, is safe for families (UN personnel reside in security proofed districts, daycare facilities, recreational centre in Gigiri, dedicated transport program, etc.), for Rest & Recuperation destination, for medical evacuations, etc. About 5,000 UN staff live and work in Nairobi and can benefit from a solid UN Security system working closely with the local police. Therefore, Nairobi was described as an attractive duty station.

### Briefing by the UN division of Healthcare management and occupational safety (formerly the UN Medical Services Division)

The TWG was briefed by Dr. Ali Shikara from the UN Division of Healthcare Management and Occupational Safety who provided the **health ratings** for 18 duty stations. The TWG was reminded that whenever a Health Questionnaire was not made available to the UN Division of Healthcare Management and Occupational Safety, this department would evaluate those facilities to the best of its knowledge and with the available information at hand. The Health Questionnaires were often not fully completed, probably due to the highly technical content of the questions asked that relate to the health-care facilities in the duty stations under evaluation. For many designated local doctors, this administrative burden of filling out the questionnaire was not an obligation and it depended very much on the goodwill of the local UN community. Duty stations which deserve special attention for the health ratings are listed below.

Out of the list of 18 duty stations under review, 9 were adjusted for their global rating:

DUTY STATIONS	ICSC INFORMATION SHARED	OVERALL NEW RATING
<b>Manaus, Brazil</b>	<p>This is a new duty station where UNHCR and UNFPA will be deploying staff very soon. It is situated in the Amazon. The humidity of the climate makes it sometimes oppressive. Because it seems to be a modern city, it could warrant an overall A rating, but the TWG felt that LOC and ISO could only merit a B, and CLI a C.</p> <p>It is a busy city of more than two million people, with 4 hospitals. With the data collected way before the COVID-19 crisis, the health facilities were assessed at the A level for this new duty station on the list which needed to be established due to the refugees’ inflow from Venezuela. HEA was rated at A.</p>	Adjusted from A to B and in transition until June 2021 (COVID-19)

DUTY STATIONS	ICSC INFORMATION SHARED	OVERALL NEW RATING
<b>Cartagena, Colombia</b>	UN Verification Mission in Colombia since September 2017– it was an inactive duty station at the last annual review in November 2018 but deployment of staff is foreseen, so an out-of-cycle classification request was submitted. Security is assessed at the B level (demilitarization taking place but some groups are reluctant to put down arms).	Adjusted from A to B. and in transition until June 2021 (COVID-19)
<b>Huaquillas, Ecuador</b>	This is a new duty station situated at a border crossing point between Ecuador and Peru. It has a very warm climate for most of the year with a high level of humidity. It is an area prone to earthquakes. It has good connections to the Capital Quito by plane and neighboring Peru. Most of the ratings are assessed at B (HEA, SEC, ISO, HOU) but CLI deserved a C, and LOC was assessed at C. The TWG believed that it should be assessed overall at the C level and for one year.	Adjusted from B to C and in transition until June 2021 (COVID-19)
<b>Nekemte, Ethiopia</b>	<p>This is a new duty station, at about 350 km from the capital Addis Ababa, where the closest airport is found. Apart from the relatively nice climate, all ratings were assessed at the C level. This duty station will be part of the annual review for Africa in November 2020.</p> <p>The WG believed that the health rating of B originally given by the UN Health authorities was a bit exaggerated considering that the local hospital is not so great. Overall health rating was maintained at the B level.</p>	Adjusted from C to D; duty station will be reviewed again in Nov. 2020
<b>Shiraz, Iran</b>	This duty station was rated overall at the C level in the review of 2018 and although there seem to be some improvements in terms of security, the HEA factor would be seriously affected by the COVID-19 crisis in the whole country.	Adjusted from B to C until the next review in 2022.
<b>Palenque, Mexico</b>  <b>&amp; Tijuana, Mexico</b>	<p>This is a new duty station. Many migrants, asylum seekers and refugees and the UNHCR and the WFP needed to deploy staff there. Hot climate, very humid, C for CLI. LOC was assessed at the C level. The LOC conditions were assessed at C as there seemed to be some restrictions of movements after 18hoo.</p> <p>This is a new duty station. Many migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees; the presence of UNHCR, UNICEF, and IOM among others. Very close to the USA border, San Diego at about 50 miles. But quite a modern city with reliable internet connections and electricity services. Because SEC, CLI, ISO, and HOU were rated at the B level, the TWG felt that the overall rating should be B.</p>	Adjusted from B to C and in transition until June 2021 (COVID-19)  Adjusted from A to B and in transition until June 2021 (COVID-19)
<b>Beira, Mozambique</b>	<p>This time around a questionnaire was submitted to the ICSC. There was a bad cyclone in 2019 and the overall rating was E. But in the meantime, despite all, the level of isolation had changed (from C to B) with more flights weekly to South Africa, Nairobi and Maputo. HEA, CLI, LOC, and HOU were all assessed at the C level.</p> <p>The WG had to consult again the Medical Doctor of the UN as participants were doubtful that the health facilities would warrant a B. Before 2014, no questionnaire was ever submitted and old data seemed to continue being used!</p>	Adjusted from C to D, until next annual review in November 2020

DUTY STATIONS	ICSC INFORMATION SHARED	OVERALL NEW RATING
<b>Gaziantep, Turkey</b>	This was a resubmission. Because of its geographical position close to Syria and the influx of refugees, many agencies were deployed in this duty station (UNHRC, OCHA, WFP, IOM, etc.). The RC noted an improvement in the inter-agency acts of cooperation. The TWG noted that the COVID-19 pandemic has had serious impacts on the life of refugees in these camps.	Adjusted from A to B
<b>Esquipulas, Guatemala</b>	This was a new duty station which was assessed by the ICSC, at the request of the UNHCR, but then declared inactive for the time being. A relatively small city in the eastern part of Guatemala, an important place of Catholic pilgrimage for Central America. Climate was rated at the C level because of hot and highly humid weather. HEA was rated at the C level, not great in terms of infrastructure. The Spanish language is the only language spoken and that could be a barrier for expatriates and their families. HEA, CLI, ISO were rated at the C level, and SEC, LOC, and HOU were rated at the B level.	Overall rating at C, on a temporary basis, until the deployment of staff.

### Review of the list of non-family duty stations (NFDS) & duty stations with family restrictions

In the final part of the meeting, the TWG was invited to review the list of NFDS and duty stations with family restrictions, which contained 281 duty stations with an active formal hardship classification. A global list of 558 locations/duty stations was compiled by the ICSC Secretariat and maintained for other purposes such as Danger Pay applicable to staff members travelling on mission status or for rest and recuperation cycles. UNDSS was the entity indicating the family restrictions and the UNDP representatives would use these data for the Field Group's implementation of the rest and recuperation entitlements.

The discussions were focused on the following changes/additions:

Country/Area	Duty Station	Family restrictions effective 1 Jan 2020	Family restrictions effective 1 Jul 2020	Comments
ETHIOPIA	Bule Hora	N	Y	DSS Family restrictions "Yes" by DSS June 2020 - NEED COMMUNIQUE
ETHIOPIA	Nekemte	N	Y	
ETHIOPIA	Tongo	N	Y	
MOZAMBIQUE	Pemba	New	Y	Temp. Class. UNDSS Communique 20 May 2020 announcing Family Restrictions without evacuation (no dependents present)
NIGERIA	Takum	New	Y	Temp. Class. of D. Located in LGA in Taraba State, Nigeria.
PAPUA NEW GUINEA	Wewak	New	Y	New Temp. Class. of D UNDSS Communique 9 June 2020 announcing Family Restrictions without evacuation (no dependents present)
VENEZUELA	Valencia	New	N	New Temp. Class. Of D.

### **Danger Pay**

TWG participants were reminded that the ICSC website had been updated, including the amounts allowed for locally-recruited staff with a revised FAQ, in cooperation with WHO, and translated in all 6 UN languages. The ICSC Secretariat also informed TWG participants that the current Danger Pay cycle would be expiring on 30 June 2020 for both the security-related danger pay and the COVID-19 related amounts; therefore, the UNDSS recommendation for the upcoming cycle were not available yet. The WHO representative was requested to follow up on the possible recommendation for the extension of the COVID-19 Danger Pay.

### **Pilot project of E-duty stations, “difficult duty stations”**

The UNDP and UNISERV representatives asked the ICSC Secretariat to devote a few minutes to the topic of duty stations with extreme hardship, classified at the E level, where internationally-recruited staff are allowed to live with their dependents. These duty stations are considered safe by UNDSS standards and are not declared NFDS. The UNGA had granted, on a pilot basis, an amount of USD 15,000 for staff members with eligible dependents in E duty stations<sup>1</sup> and had requested the ICSC to submit to the UNGA 75 (Sept. 2020) a report on these payments, the impacts thereof, the actual costs for organizations and the impact on the workforce planning. Against that background, a short discussion followed whereby it was clear to all, including the ICSC, that this pilot project should be extended to similarly difficult D duty stations and also extended until the UNGA 76 in 2021. The data and information to be compiled would include the impact of COVID-19 on duty stations with extreme hardship conditions.

It was noted that the ICSC Secretariat had been fully supportive of this pilot project and of extending it to D duty Stations to help reduce the risk to families, particularly in the duty stations affected by COVID-19, where health infrastructures were not adequate to install families. It was further noted that, by paying this entitlement, some savings would be realized from not installing family members in D duty stations and from not having to medically-evacuate them in situations.

### **LAST REMARKS**

For the first time, background documents were provided to the participants in advance which allowed us to provide feedback to the ICSC Secretariat in advance, to avoid too lengthy discussions on each duty station for review. All participants interacted in a lively fashion. More than ever, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and the obligations of Duty of Care framework, the work carried out by this TWG has proved its importance and relevance for the UN as a whole. It is in a good position to inform the UN staff of the exact conditions, before deployment.

### **Annexes:**

- 1) List of duty stations – mid-year review 2020 – Final ratings
- 2) List of participants

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<sup>1</sup> If staff members choose not to install their eligible dependants in the E duty station, an amount of USD 15,000 per year is payable (pilot project from 1 Jan. 2019 to be revisited in 2020-2021) in lieu of installation-related payments for those dependants.

**Annex 1**

**List of duty stations – mid-year review 2020 – Final ratings**

<b>Country</b>	<b>Duty Station</b>	<b>Temp. Class.</b>	<b>WG Recommendation</b>
BRAZIL	Manaus	A	B
COLOMBIA	Cartagena	A	B
ECUADOR	Huaquillas	B	C
ETHIOPIA	Nekemte	C	D
GUATEMALA	Esquipulas	C	Inactive
GUATEMALA	Puerto Barrios	B	C
GUATEMALA	Tecun Uman	C	C
INDONESIA	Banda Aceh	C	C
IRAN	Shiraz	C	C
LIBYA	Benghazi	E	E
LIBYA	Sebha	E	E
MEXICO	Tijuana	B	B
MEXICO	Palenque	B	C
MOZAMBIQUE	Beira	E	D
PALAU	Koror	A	B
SUDAN	Golo (W. Darfur)	E	E
SYRIA	Deir-ez-Zor	E	E

<b>Out-of-cycle</b>			
<b>Country</b>	<b>Duty Station</b>	<b>Current Classification</b>	<b>WG Recommendation</b>
TURKEY	Gaziantep	A	B

## Annex 2

## LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

<b>UNITED NATIONS</b>	Ms. Sumiyo Sudo-Rao, Chief, Field Strategy & Conditions of Service Section Mr. Maxim Golovinov, HR Policy Officer, FSCS - (Alternate) Mr. Kenneth Ewang, HR Officer, HRP - (Alternate) Ms. Maria Margareth Baccay, FSCS - (Alternate)
<b>UNDP</b>	Mr. James Hanneman, Officer-in-Charge, Policy and Compensation Unit Mr. Andrew Villanueva, HR Analyst, HRPCU - (Alternate)
<b>UNFPA</b>	Mr. Jan Weidmann, Policy Adviser, Division for Human Resources
<b>UNHCR</b>	Ms. Mariam Moayed, Chief, HROPS Ms. Claudie Barrat, Senior HR Policy Officer, HROPS - (Alternate)
<b>UNICEF</b>	Mr. Yuichi Kawamoto, HR Policy Specialist Mr. Pedro Juan Cruz Yabar, HR Policy Specialist - (Alternate) Ms. Jayeon Koo, HR Officer - (Alternate)
<b>FAO</b>	Ms. Ann Dehlin, HR Officer 
<b>WFP</b>	Mr. Andrew Patterson, Chief, HR Policy & Compliance Branch
<b>PAHO</b>	Ms. Ana Maria Falquez, HR Specialist, Compensation and Entitlements
<b>WHO</b>	Ms. Josiane Sidibe Pimpie, Senior Compensation Specialist
<b>CCISUA</b>	Mr. Guy Avognon, Representative
<b>FICSA</b>	Ms. Véronique Allain, Representative Mr. Cosimo Melpignano, Representative - (Alternate) Mr. Vito Musa, Representative - (Alternate)
<b>UNISERV</b>	Mr. Stephen Towler, Representative Mr. Mark Polane, Representative - (Alternate) Ms. Fikerte Assefa, Representative - (Alternate)
<b>UNDSS</b>	Mr. Igor Mitrokhin, Deputy Director, Division of Regional Operations Mr. Luc Andriamampianina, Programme Management Officer

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