



Federation of International  
Civil Servants' Associations

# CIRCULAR

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## OPENING STATEMENT

### DELIVERED BY

**THE FEDERATION OF INTERNATIONAL CIVIL SERVANTS' ASSOCIATIONS (FICSA)  
TO THE 91<sup>ST</sup> SESSION OF THE INTERNATIONAL CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION (ICSC)  
(Virtual session, 3 May 2021)**

*Submitted by Tanya Quinn-Maguire, FICSA President*

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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: Cosimo Melpignano, FICSA General Secretary

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Mr. Chairman, Members of the Commission and Distinguished Colleagues, I extend greetings on behalf of the almost 40,000 staff represented by the FICSA membership to the distinguished participants of the 91<sup>st</sup> session of the ICSC.

I hope that you and your loved ones have weathered the storm of COVID 19 as well as could be expected until now, and I look forward to the time when we can safely greet each other in person.

FICSA congratulates Ms Claudia Bueno Reynaga of Mexico, Mr. Pan-Suk Kim of the Republic of Korea, and Mr. Igor Golobuvskiy of the Russian Federation on their appointment to the Commission. I am particularly pleased to note the step towards gender parity within the Commission. FICSA thanks the outgoing Commissioners for their work and wishes them all the very best in their future endeavours. We look forward to working with all newly elected and continuing members of the Commission during our deliberations this week and in the coming months.

It is hard to believe that the world has been dealing with the impact of COVID 19 for over one year. I call on the members of the Commission to keep in mind that the matters we are about to debate in the coming days, and the decisions you are going to take, should take into account the social, economic and human costs which all staff across the UN common system continue to endure. More than ever it is important to be transparent, accountable, and, not least, predictable, during such stressful times. We have a collective obligation to show duty of care towards all UN staff, ensure that the United Nations Common System is seen to be “walking the talk” and that the UN workplace can serve as an example of how to “build back better” and ensure “decent work” and conditions of service for our staff while consistently putting the mental health and wellbeing of staff at the centre of all deliberations.

As the Chairman opens the first substantive agenda item with a review of the resolutions and decisions adopted by the GA at its 75<sup>th</sup> session (document R.2), I would like to acknowledge with appreciation the positive actions recommended by the 5<sup>th</sup> Committee. However, FICSA notes with concern that no action was taken on the recommended increase in the dependency allowance. This was despite extensive efforts by all stakeholders during the 90<sup>th</sup> session to find a compromise ad-hoc calculation in order to propose a much-reduced allowance for 2021 for which there has been no adjustment since 2011. As FICSA has previously stated, this issue will not magically go away. While the topic is not up for discussion at this session, we reiterate for the record that this is not in fact an increase in benefits, rather a long-overdue adjustment.

With view to keeping our opening comments short, I will restrict the rest of our comments to the key issues on this session’s agenda:

### **ACPAQ**

FICSA was pleased to have contributed to the deliberations of the ACPAQ in March this year. We hope that discussions in this session will use the recommendations from that Committee to build on the good work of the Working Group on Operational Rules last year and bring us closer to the desired end product of a transparent, accurate, stable, and predictable compensation system.

FICSA appreciates that our suggestion during the ACPAQ to pilot the draft expenditure survey with staff was accepted by the Secretariat. Many of our members nominated staff to participate in the testing and we look forward to receiving the results of this initiative as well as understanding how the data received has impacted the final survey which will be sent to staff. This provides a model for the effective consideration of staff views going forward and hope that we can build on this good cooperation in the future.

Of course, the key issue of the timing of the 2021 round of surveys remains outstanding. During the meeting of ACPAQ, it was clear that only the Commission can make such a decision. As such, we once again draw the attention of the Commissioners to the concerns of our members that 2021 may not be the appropriate time to carry out such surveys, both due to continued lockdowns in various parts of the world as well as concerns that the current expenditure pattern may not reflect a “normal” situation. At the end of this session, FICSA expects to have clarity on the proposed criteria which will guide the Commission’s decision on why a baseline survey **should** or **should not** take place, as well as any other safety measures that might be put in place in addition to the operational rules. This will enable us to confidently report to our members that the ICSC has taken all factors into consideration.

As usual, FICSA spared no effort in actively contributing to the activities of the Working Group on the General Service salary survey methodology. Mr Chair, we know that you are very much aware that the impact of this Working Group cannot be underestimated. The result of the review is anxiously awaited by over 55,000 locally recruited staff in more than 170 countries – which could impact the lives of over 250,000 women, men, and children dependant on staff’s salaries. Therefore, we are confident that the Commission will acknowledge the concerted efforts of the Working Group to-date, and support its conclusions and recommendations, as presented in documents R.9 and CRP.3. FICSA particularly welcomes the consensus reached on the recommendations related to Dual Scales and Transitional Arrangements.

Another noteworthy development since the Commission last met is the outcome of the Task Force on Categorization of Duty Stations for the purposes of determining the number of comparators to be retained for calculation of comprehensive survey results. For the record, FICSA notes the effective and inclusive approach adopted by the Chair of the TF, Mr Mantovani, and the high quality of the supporting documents produced by the ICSC secretariat, both of which facilitated an inclusive and cooperative environment, resulting in a set of consensus recommendations. In preparing for the session this week, I had the pleasure of consulting with FICSA’s long-serving expert, Mauro Pace, who represented the three staff Federations in the Task Force. I would like to take a moment to commend the ongoing dedication of Mauro in serving on these technical bodies with a view to finding sustainable solutions in the long-term interests of our common system.

Of course, the work of this group has not yet concluded, and we note that the next meeting will focus on the use of external data as well as the key role of the LSSC. FICSA hopes that the collaborative approach noted to date will continue with a view to concluding this long-awaited review on a positive note for all stakeholders.

FICSA is pleased that the Secretariat has made the decision to ensure that the work of the Commission continues by holding this and other important meetings virtually. While we acknowledge the difficult circumstances, we hope that the much-reduced time for discussions will allow for due consideration of all perspectives. FICSA looks forward to the return of face-to-face meetings when the situation allows, starting with the planned hybrid session in August so that we can ensure the fullest possible discussion for the benefit of all stakeholders.

Thank you for your attention today and I look forward to our constructive deliberations in the coming days.

