



Federation of International
Civil Servants' Associations

CIRCULAR

FICSA/CIRC/1350

Ref: Offorg/ICSC

Geneva, 16 August 2021

OPENING STATEMENT

DELIVERED BY

**THE FEDERATION OF INTERNATIONAL CIVIL SERVANTS' ASSOCIATIONS (FICSA)
TO THE 92ND SESSION OF THE INTERNATIONAL CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION (ICSC)
(WIPO, Geneva, 16 August 2021)**

Submitted by Tanya Quinn-Maguire, FICSA President

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

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Commission and Distinguished Colleagues,

The FICSA delegation looks forward to working with all members of the Commission, ICSC Secretariat, the Executive Heads Representatives and HR Representatives over the coming two weeks.

I am delighted that we have resumed some semblance of normality with this hybrid meeting and on behalf of our delegation I am happy to welcome those of you that travelled to Geneva and wish you a safe and pleasant stay.

I must mention, yet again, the immeasurable impact that the global COVID pandemic has had on lives over the past 18 months. As well as the tragic millions of deaths, people across the globe continue to endure the well-documented devastating global impacts of this disease, including on equality, unemployment, economic crisis - particularly in countries without access to vaccines - and the education lag with many children still out of school. Our colleagues in the UN are of course not immune. This prolonged situation continues to have an ongoing and worsening impact on the mental health and wellbeing of staff across the UN common system, including loneliness, fear about the future and about returning to work on the premises.

FICSA looks forward to the discussion on the comprehensive assessment report of the compensation package. We agree with paragraph four of document 92/R.3 that any compensation package should support the delivery of the organization's mandate and should be: competitive, fair and equitable, transparent, simple in design, easy to administer and easily understood by staff and stakeholders. While we of course appreciate the work of the Secretariat in preparing document R.3, we would like to remind the Commission that the review of the compensation package has been a long and difficult process for all stakeholders. We also feel that it would be disingenuous of us not to mention that while there has been movement towards the stated goals of the revised compensation package and staff have generally welcomed initiatives such as the single parent allowance, there are some areas where changes have resulted in reports from staff of increased hardship, such as the education grant, periodicity of steps and the language allowance.

FICSA was fully involved in the discussions around the post adjustment and we welcomed the agreement at the last ICSC session on the criteria to assess whether or not a cost of living survey should take place depending on the COVID 19 situation. The status report provided by the Secretariat in document 92/R.6 provides details of many welcome initiatives to support the 2021 round of surveys. However, staff are particularly concerned about training on the new processes and we look forward to seeing how that will be prioritized in the coming weeks as a key factor to ensure the successful engagement of staff. We also remain concerned about the unrealistic timelines being pursued, despite a tri federation message to the Secretariat following their message to organizations in July instructing them to form the LSC with a first meeting proposed for 24 July. Our suggestion to wait a few weeks until the end of the peak vacation season, which staff have not been able to avail of for over 18 months due to COVID, was not accepted. This has resulted in unnecessary confusion and panic on behalf of staff who feel they may not be adequately represented if the timeline is not more flexible. We also find it difficult to understand why there is a schedule of surveys already produced when, apart from New York, there has not yet been an assessment of the agreed criteria in the duty stations which the Commission approved as a pre-requisite to surveys being held.

Of particular interest to our thousands of staff based in field duty stations will be the discussion on the impact of the revised criteria for hardship classification which is presented in document 92/R.7 While FICSA agrees with the statement in paragraph 52 (b) of document R.7, that the revised criteria is generally fit for purpose in classifying duty stations according

to the conditions of work and life for the international civil service, we note that no methodology is fool-proof. Among other details, FICSA will reiterate our long-standing call to improve data collected under the health factor during the discussions on this topic.

With regard to the mobility incentive for discussion under document R.9, we note the lack of a consistent and common understanding of the definition of mobility across the common system. As such, we look forward to participating in the discussions and understanding more the perspectives of the different stakeholders.

We also look forward to the discussions on the issue of the education grant under document 91/R.4 which is also touched upon under Agenda item 6, related to the compensation package. FICSA notes with concern that a new sliding scale has been agreed to by the ICSC, but the General Assembly has remained silent on its implementation. As such, we appreciate that this item is on the agenda and the recommendations of the Commission will once again go to the Fifth Committee for consideration which we fully hope will result in the eventual agreement to the proposed improvements of the sliding scale.

FICSA appreciates the report of the working group on GS salary survey methodologies which is presented in document 92/R.10. We share the working group's view that the possibility of using external data needs further testing and piloting – at least in a larger number of representative duty stations - in parallel with the conventional survey methodology. The three federations have already jointly nominated two representatives on the task force that should draw up the terms of reference and parameters of the pilot project and we look forward to receiving their report in this regard in due course.

FICSA notes with concern the troubling situation in Afghanistan and we send our best wishes to the citizens of that country. In particular, our thoughts are with the 3,000 national staff and their dependents as well as the 30 international staff remaining and we reiterate the call made by the three Federations to the Secretary General yesterday that everything possible is done to protect our colleagues.

Finally, I would like to note that while obviously each Federation has its own perspective on each of the issues up for discussion, we would like to highlight that FICSA has been working closely with our sister Federations, CCISUA and UNISERV, in preparation for this session and, in principle, our statements and comments during the coming days should be seen as complementary to each other.

Thank you for your attention and I look forward to a productive two weeks.

Note: all members would be able to review the ICSC annual report once it is published at <https://icsc.un.org/Home/Library/AnnualRep> in due time.