



Federation of International
Civil Servants' Associations

CIRCULAR

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OPENING STATEMENT

**DELIVERED BY THE PRESIDENT OF
THE FEDERATION OF INTERNATIONAL CIVIL SERVANTS' ASSOCIATIONS (FICSA)
TO THE 98TH SESSION OF THE INTERNATIONAL CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION (ICSC)
(Rome, 15 July 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, President

Mr. Chair, Distinguished Members of the ICSC, Colleagues,

On behalf of FICSA, let me express my gratitude to Mr. Larbi Djacta, Chairman of the ICSC, for his remarks expressed in his opening statement. We also extend our appreciation to Vice Chair and acting Executive Secretary for fostering a collaborative working atmosphere between the ICSC Secretariat and FICSA throughout the reporting period. We further extend our thanks to the entire staff of the ICSC Secretariat for their dedicated efforts in preparing for this session and for their ongoing support to the Commission's work throughout the year.

On behalf of the FICSA membership, I stand before you to sound the clarion call.

The clarion call is to remind ourselves of the very principles on which the UN workforce has been built, namely recruiting from amongst the best and brightest professionals around the world.

Dear colleagues, this is not only a recommendation, but a commitment that UN member states have undertaken more than 75 years ago! Me, just like you, have had the privilege of building our careers under some of the most coveted and distinguished Civil servants, scholars, and legal minds the world

had to offer. We have built our legacy on theirs, but now we must ask ourselves: “Are we leaving the same foundation to generation after us?”

The true joy of representing staff lies in listening to those lived experiences and learning about what drives and motivates our colleagues. But let me tell you, these voices are becoming more critical and more disheartened. Staff are concerned about the frequency of the review of the compensation package as it drives away their attention and energy from the core of their work, which is to deliver to our member states best-in-class services and to ‘leave no one behind’. Frequent reviews of the compensation package pose an unnecessary administrative and financial burden on the entire UN system and the member states, not to mention the uncertainty invokes in our staff and their families.

The ICSC was established by the General Assembly as the body that acts as the equivalent of the public service commission. The ICSC’s mandate is to advise the General Assembly on trends and to preserve the predictability, flexibility, relevance, and adaptability of our compensation package. By increasing the frequency and requesting a comprehensive review, the staff is then questioning if this is the best use of our technical resources. We feel that generational periodicity of 10-15 years is sufficient for an exercise in auditing and benchmarking.

Our UN colleagues have been working in an environment of perpetually doing more with less. Ensuring sustainable job satisfaction has never been of more importance. That is why FICSA is now more committed than ever to continue advocating for the staff’s needs and working with the ICSC and the member states to deliver on the promises enshrined in the Secretary General’s ambitious UN 2.0 agenda.

FICSA welcomes the decision of organizations to implement new levels of hardship allowance, and danger day. At the same time, we strongly support the continuation of the D/E pilot. The pilot has proven to be a viable option that allows staff to maintain their connections with family while remaining productive and delivering to the member states.

FICSA would like to emphasize that money in no way replaces the physical presence of a staff member to their family. Thus, FICSA urges the General Assembly to continue to focus on policies that support family friendly initiatives.

FICSA welcomes the request by member states for the monitoring of diversity including geographical diversity, age distribution of the workforce, and in the implementation of existing gender policies towards achieving gender parity in the United Nations common system. In view of the upcoming Beijing Plus 30 process in 2025, it is urgent to demonstrate tangible and more robust achievements 30 years after the Beijing Platform for Action has been adopted. 2025 will provide opportunities to review achievements, identify gaps, address challenges, and explore opportunities. Currently women remain significantly underrepresented, particularly at the P4 level and above. The pace of progress in reaching gender parity needs to be further accelerated. As the General Assembly looks at diversity, FICSA would like to emphasize the importance of applying an intersectional lens that looks at gender, race, age, disability, sexual orientation and identity and other items of concern.

Finally, FICSA reaffirms its support and commitment towards the existing review of the compensation package and the work being done within the various working groups. We take note of the report of Working Groups 2 and 3 and look forward to participating in the discussion on these agenda items, the outcome of which will provide further guidance to the improvement of the compensation package. While we appreciate the need for further modernizing and streamlining, any further erosion of the compensation package will remain controversial and contribute towards increased attrition of staff.

FICSA is committed to continue contributing constructively, advocating for the international civil service workforce's interests, with modern and progressive ideas in mind.

We reiterate that our focus remains resolute on enhancing stability, transparency, job security, job clarity, both physical and mental health, and career focus. We acknowledge that the compensation package must evolve with time. However, maintaining independence, flexibility, and attractiveness means constructing a solid package, tailored to needs of a highly skilled, international civil service of all genders, ages, and nations. Going forward, we would like to see opportunities for growth and rejuvenation. Our employment framework must also be ready to safeguard the knowledge we have built and respect the legacies that we leave behind because we want the generations following us to be as excited about our mandate as we once were when we joined.

As we now progress through the agenda over the coming days, and further delve into the various aspects of the commission's report, we look forward to engaging and cordial discussions, duly representing the viewpoints and sentiments of the staff we represent truthfully and candidly.

Mr. Chair, Esteemed Commissioners, FICSA extends its best wishes to you, and indeed to all of us, as we embark on our endeavours over the forthcoming two weeks.

Thank you for your attention.
