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INTERNATIONAL STAFF ASSOCIATION OF UNESCO

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**ORAL STATEMENT BY ISAU ON ITEM 5:
FOLLOW-UP TO DECISIONS AND RESOLUTIONS
ADOPTED BY THE EXECUTIVE BOARD AND THE
GENERAL CONFERENCE AT THEIR PREVIOUS SESSIONS**

PART III: HUMAN RESOURCES ISSUES

- A. Geographical distribution and gender balance of the staff of the Secretariat;
- B. Feasibility of a new health insurance scheme (follow-up to 191 EX/Decision 29; 196 EX/Decision. 5 (V.B));
- C. Annual report (2015) by the International Civil Service Commission (ISCS): report by the Director-General;
- D. Preliminary proposals for a human resources management strategy for 2017-2022.

Madam Chairperson,
Madam Representative of the Director-General,
Ladies and gentlemen, members of the Finance and Administrative Commission (FA),
Excellencies,

I have the honour and pleasure to take the floor as the newly-elected President by direct popular vote of the International Staff Association of UNESCO (ISAU).

Since my speaking time is very brief, I shall limit my statement to a few succinct comments on document 199 EX/5 Part III, which deals with human resources issues.

A. Geographical distribution and gender balance of the staff of the Secretariat

With regard to the geographical distribution and gender balance of the staff of the Secretariat, ISAU supports the policy being pursued by the Administration, and encourages it to strengthen that policy. In this connection, ISAU urges that the initiatives taken to correct the persistent imbalances in that regard be strengthened in order to remove the remaining anomalies.

We would also like to see the principle of geographical distribution and gender balance applied to consultants. Finally, we welcome the resumption of the Young Professionals programme, which should be renewed annually, with a quota reserved for field offices after one year's training at Headquarters.

B. Feasibility of a new health insurance scheme (follow-up to 191 EX/Decision 29 and 196 EX/Decision 5 (V.B))

With respect to the Medical Benefits Fund (MBF), ISAU agrees that “the study with a view to introducing a new health insurance scheme that excludes ASHI be put on hold”, and we consider the current arrangements to be an acquired right. ISAU nevertheless notes that MBF has not yet completely recovered from the adverse consequences of past administrative practice, which was erratic to say the least, or from the lack of decisions or measures of good governance (in particular, cases where colleagues have been refused health care by certain hospitals).

The staff therefore urge that everything should be done to enhance the governance and administrative management of MBF in order to ensure that it is sustainable and efficient. Unfortunately, the situation in which our newly retired colleagues find themselves is not brilliant. They have to wait on average for several months before they get their first pension payment. The transition to a new computer system cannot explain everything.

You will therefore appreciate that the staff are very worried about this situation and all these attacks against their social protection, which are helping to dismantle their acquired rights and which, over the years, are subjecting them to an increasingly heavy financial burden.

C. Annual report (2015) by the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC): report by the Director-General (follow-up to 114 EX/Decision 8.4, 22 C/Resolution 37, 196 EX/Decision 5 (V.A), 38 C/Resolution 88)

I shall now move on to the annual report (2015) by the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC): report by the Director-General. ISAU deplores and rejects the reductions in salaries and allowances recommended by ICSC and adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations. Originally mooted with a view to simplification, this reform has in fact now become not only an exercise in whittling away benefits and encouragements to recruitment and mobility, but also in unfair targeting of certain vulnerable categories of staff.

All the measures recommended will have an adverse effect on the conditions of employment and service of staff, especially those who wish to work in difficult duty stations, single-parent families, and hence implicitly women, and clearly target young staff members with family responsibilities.

Well aware of the challenges facing the United Nations and its specialized agencies, ISAU is of the view that these agencies should invest in their most precious resource: the men and women who work there. All over the world, these agencies need committed staff members with top skills, whom they need to be able to attract when they are still young and retain once they have gained experience, with salaries, a range of benefits and job security that are commensurate with their qualifications, respecting the principles the agencies adopted when they were established, with a view to accomplishing, we must not forget, sometimes at the risk of their lives, the missions that are assigned to them.

D. Preliminary proposals for a human resources strategy for 2017-2022 (follow-up to 196 EX/Decision 23 (III))

I now come to the last part of the document under consideration, regarding the “Preliminary proposals for a human resources strategy for 2017-2022”. This forthcoming strategy will be crucial for the future and effectiveness of the Secretariat.

Surprisingly, the “preliminary proposals” put forward on this topic remain silent on the record of the years of implementation and evaluation of the Human Resources Management Strategy: Action Plan 2011-2016. These proposals thus draw no lessons from that Strategy, nor do they make reference to the best practices followed by other United Nations agencies.

They also gloss over a little too rapidly the fact that over the past five years, reforms have followed in quick succession at the same time as there have been drastic staff reductions in the Organization. ISAU therefore reiterates its request for an evaluation of the internal reforms undertaken, especially given that they invariably give rise to the same questions regarding their purpose, since they do not answer the expectations of the staff.

Indeed, the persistence of archaic practices (such as the opaque process of acknowledgement of merit) and other excesses or administrative irregularities (in particular with respect to recruitment and post descriptions and classifications), have served only to worsen the inequality of opportunities for career development among staff members according to their contractual status, their gender and/or their nationality. This is an unending source of disappointment and frustration.

The same goes for training programmes, most of which were developed unilaterally, without any consultation of staff representatives, and not all of which have actually been implemented, owing to the financial crisis within the Organization.

I shall not comment in detail on the two priority themes of this forthcoming strategy, namely “I. Build staff capabilities for the SDGs” and “II. Create an engaging and enabling work environment”. I shall spare you a litany of remarks and stick to basics. In the light of all the reforms and changes that have affected staff in recent years, and above all the changes yet to come, especially those relating to the Invest for Efficient Delivery plan and “consideration of contractual arrangements”, vigilance is more necessary than ever. A culture of dialogue and consultation with staff representatives is primordial. ISAU has shown itself to be willing engage in a permanent dialogue with the Administration by means of discussions and regular and fruitful consultations with its representatives.

In this spirit of social dialogue, and before concluding, I would ask you to ensure that the staff and its representatives are fully involved in this forthcoming human resources management strategy. ISAU is convinced that this is the only way for the Organization to be in a position to attain its sustainable development goals (SDGs) calmly and effectively, negotiating with its staff on their conditions of employment and just and equitable working conditions which are worthy of the very essence and ultimate purpose of the Organization’s mandate.

Ladies and gentlemen, members of the Finance and Administrative Commission, the new presidency of ISAU gives rise to hopes for new changes. I am the bearer of those hopes and of the voices of my colleagues, who are counting on you to ensure a diverse and egalitarian UNESCO for all staff members, whatever their nationality.

Thank you.