



3 November 2017

Madam President,
Representative of the Director-General,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

ISAU is concerned about the unprecedented crisis that UNESCO is undergoing and hopes that the Association's comments will be followed up.

We regret that the 2011-2016 human resources management strategy was not evaluated before the new 2017-2022 strategy was established.

The Bureau of Human Resources Management (HRM) should not simply provide a rubber stamp. It should be involved in the entire recruitment process for greater transparency and equity. **Competence and ethics must be the determining criteria for any recruitment.** As the staff is the Organization's most important asset, it is up to HRM to establish real plans for career development and training. Currently, it is hard to find a correlation between performance and career advancement. The quality of human resources management and the recruitment process have a direct impact on UNESCO's overall performance and effectiveness. **HRM should also take into account the command of UNESCO's two working languages in the recruitment and career development of staff in management positions.**

How is it that in this context of crisis there are so many external appointments from countries in electoral Group I, thus accentuating the imbalance in geographical distribution? This denies the diversity that UNESCO is supposed to promote!

The objectives of the human resources management strategy are laudable, but we find it hard to deem their achievement possible, in light of UNESCO's current financial situation.

With regard to postponing to 1 January 2020 the raising of the mandatory retirement age of current staff, the arguments put forward by the Administration are unfounded. The International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) was not convinced that postponing that change or leaving the mandatory age of separation unchanged would speed up organizational restructuring in the areas of human resources management. ICSC considers that the matter, affecting in particular performance management, rejuvenation of the workforce and gender balance, should be addressed through the appropriate avenues.

Implementation as from 1 January 2018 will retain staff with institutional knowledge and experience.

We are doubtful that savings could be generated by postponing to 2020 the increase in the mandatory age of retirement, given the expenses relating to such separations.

The argument that hiring entry-level staff generates cost reductions is preventing a career promotion policy that is sorely lacking in the Organization.

The argument that it balances geographical distribution is unfounded. On the contrary, we have observed an upsurge in the recruitment of staff from countries in electoral Group I.

In view of the Commission's detailed recommendations, the Administration's arguments do not support the conclusion that a postponement is appropriate, as it would only shift issues that need to be addressed by specific and appropriate measures.

With regard to the Medical Benefits Fund (MBF), UNESCO needs to have an overarching vision on the matter and to be effective in choosing healthcare providers. This is not the case for the choice of MSH International. Many problems have been reported by colleagues dissatisfied with the services provided by MSH International, which, contrary to the previous provider, do not meet their expectations. Such a lack of efficiency raises questions as to the merits of the selection of the current provider. **In the future, any change in healthcare provider should be subject to wider consultation.**

This is why we support the Administration's decision to recommend to the General Conference the amendment of the Rules of the Medical Benefits Fund (MBF) in order to return to those in force before the issuance of Administrative Circular AC/HR/43 of 21 October 2014, including the governance structure laid out therein.

Faced with these many challenges, ISAU considers that the **rebirth** of the Organization depends on the respect for the hierarchy that governs UNESCO's Constitution. The General Conference is the supreme authority for the staff and the Member States, starting with respect for unity in diversity.

We are convinced that it is up to each and every Member State to uphold the principles of cultural diversity and gender equality in the Secretariat at all levels.

ISAU, founded on the principle of **consensus**, is always open to dialogue and negotiation, and places considerable hope in the Organization's new management team, whom we wish every success. We are ready to accompany them while remaining vigilant on all matters relating to human resources.

We are in favour of an ongoing dialogue with the Administration and ask to be involved more closely in discussions on the challenges relating to human resources, including the Association's active and effective participation in decisions concerning the lives of staff members, UNESCO's human capital.

It is in this spirit that we call on Member States to take their share of responsibility in the current crisis, which is not only financial, and to support the new management team in "***the unrestricted pursuit of objective truth, and in the free exchange of ideas and knowledge***", as stated in the preamble of our Constitution.

Thank you for your attention.