



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

Thank you for granting me the floor.

The International Staff Association of UNESCO (ISAU) and the staff welcome the ratification by the Member States of the higher budget scenario, which maintains and even increases capacity for action.

The past biennium has been a period of ambitious reform and yet it is still to grasp its overall consistency.

We are dismayed, for example, at the lack of any linkage between geographical mobility and functional mobility or the field office reform. This inconsistency has served to **undermine the Organization's capacity** to successfully complete its missions. ISAU therefore welcomes the decision of the Executive Board to pause the new mobility programme for the purpose of an assessment. **ISAU wishes to point out that it supports the principle of geographical mobility.**

Regarding the Strategic Transformation, ISAU commends the Director-General for the balanced composition of the high-level reflection group. We do wish to raise one concern, however. The fact is that if the group's recommendations call for further reforms, some of those already undertaken will inevitably be cancelled out. If, on the other hand, the group's work is not taken on board, the resources will have been mobilized for nothing. Either outcome would amount to a failure to live up to the principles of effectiveness and cost-savings and would have imposed on the staff a Sisyphean drive for endless reform with no tangible results. It is only a risk, of course, but a real risk all the same.

The staff associations are ever-ready to rally in support of any reform concerning the staff, directly or indirectly.

I am thinking in particular of the Human Resources strategy centring on the creation of a positive and dynamic work environment, which has shown **no improvement in that respect**. Both the **career development path** and the **merit-based promotion policy remain non-existent**. Our colleagues find themselves **demotivated and bereft of career prospects**.

We wish to reiterate **our opposition to the abolition of Staff Rule 102.2, which allows any staff member to make an individual request for reclassification**, of which Administration makes no mention even though this point is the subject of a key draft amendment to the Staff Regulations. Such an abolition amounts to a **violation of the most basic rights of the staff** and will effectively send a **message of mistrust and disregard to staff**.

That strategy involves other technical points taken up in the written documents that we have distributed to you. We hope that you will embrace the recommendations of ISAU. The Bureau of Human Resources Management (HRM) **needs strengthening with the human and financial resources to enhance its role in recruitment and nominations**. Without greater means, we will continue to see persisting a number of abuses that we will be relentless in denouncing.

This mainly relates to staff posts, such as personal assistants (PAs), that are **subject neither to geographical distribution nor to the Appointment Review Board**. The 450 staff members concerned account for **nearly one quarter** of the entire staff and it is hard to see why they have **not been recruited in a more transparent manner**.

At the same time, let us not forget the non-staff personnel who represent 47% of the total UNESCO workforce, the management of whom is **largely beyond the control of HRM**.

Our observations indicate the need for a strategy that would cover **every individual** working for the Organization and enable genuine career planning and the fair regularization of long-term casual staff.

Another important point that needs raising: **geographical distribution, which is in the DNA of ISAU**. Even though management is making an effort for nationals of non- and underrepresented countries, 52% of the Organization's Member States are still non- or underrepresented. The concept of geographical representation, however, does not stop at the individual representation of States. It also needs to be geocultural and, hence, more inclusive of geographical groups. Yet the Secretariat **does not provide full and clear information**. The analysis carried out by ISAU to shed light on the decision of States reveals a significant overweighting in favour of Group I, which represents 44% of the staff. It is striking to note that Management does not take into account staff members from Israel and the United States of America, even though they account for 46 posts.

We wish to remind that the United States' debt will continue to grow because 43 of its nationals are staff members.

That said, we **insist on the need** for Management to provide information that better reflects the geographical distribution and cultural diversity within the Secretariat, where posts **belong to the Organization and not to the sectors**.

Having arrived at the end of my speech, I wish to take a few moments to put things in perspective. I entered UNESCO in 1983, at the time of the 22nd session of the General Conference, just after the United States had left. Over these past 36 years, I have seen our Organization developing, changing and in the throes of various crises. I have always believed in UNESCO's mandate and trusted in the dedication of my colleagues. As I prepare to leave the Secretariat, at a time when the United States has once again left, I wanted to convey to you, on my own behalf and that of the staff, my certainty that UNESCO will manage to renew and even, I hope, strengthen itself to better serve both present and future generations. UNESCO will need you in order to achieve this.

Thank you for your attention.