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FOLLOW-UP TO DECISIONS AND RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED BY THE EXECUTIVE BOARD AND THE GENERAL CONFERENCE AT THEIR PREVIOUS SESSIONS

PART III

MANAGEMENT ISSUES

ADDENDUM

COMMENTS OF THE INTERNATIONAL STAFF ASSOCIATION OF UNESCO (ISAU)

SUMMARY

D. UNESCO's strategic transformation

Pursuant to item 9.2.7 of the UNESCO Human Resources Manual, the International Staff Association of UNESCO (ISAU) submits its comments on human resources issues (document 210 EX/5.III.D).

1. UNESCO's strategic transformation is an ever-present concern for the International Staff Association of UNESCO (ISAU), which never loses sight of the fact that staff members cannot progress in an organization out of step with the demands of the times. Similarly, an organization will fail to transform if its administration acts as if staff merely constituted an adjustment variable. You may therefore rest assured that ISAU will always be a constructive and demanding partner with regard to this issue. It is in this spirit that we have taken note of the document submitted to Member States for debate.

Performance management

2. First of all, we wish to reiterate our profound disagreement with the decision of the Bureau of Human Resources Management (ADM/HRM) to abolish the Review Panel and the Reports Board and to replace them with a performance review board. ISAU had already expressed its total disagreement in an announcement made on 4 December 2020 and in its address to the Finance and Administrative (FA) Commission during this past December's session of the Executive Board. We



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deplore the Administration's decision to go ahead with this projected change despite the many warnings issued by the staff associations. We deeply regret that the performance review board excludes the staff member from his or her hearing, thereby depriving him or her of the right to be defended and represented. This very clearly constitutes a violation of staff rights.

3. The document tells us that an updated system is in place, but this does not guarantee effectiveness or transparency in performance management. Supervisors must be better trained to manage staff, to motivate staff and to create a healthy and dynamic work environment. We also reiterate our request for a 360-degree evaluation.

4. The document makes a general reference to the establishment of a performance culture, but no mention is made of any effort to link performance to advancement, a shortcoming likely to demotivate staff and thus destroy the very idea of performance culture. Without such a link, we can expect no more than a negative culture of punishment and penalties.

5. From the standpoint of performance, we also wish to emphasize that management training such as that which is given to senior management staff should be accessible to all staff if the Organization genuinely intends to foster the performance culture after which it strives.

Mobility

6. It is surprising to see the mobility policy presented as a model, even though the problems it had created were so egregious that it had to be suspended for an overhaul. It is surprising that Member States have been given such a subjective and counterfactual account of reality.

7. ISAU had denounced the first mobility exercise because it lacked transparency and fairness and had many flaws. Moreover, the conclusions drawn by the Internal Oversight Service (IOS) evaluation of the exercise confirmed these shortcomings and flaws, leading IOS to make several recommendations, which ISAU has endorsed.

8. We wish to point out that in its report (document 210 EX/5.II), IOS states that the mobility programme can be resumed, **provided that** the necessary adjustments are made thereto.

9. We also ask that the staff associations be fully included throughout the process of the new mobility exercise.

Field offices

10. With regard to the reform of the field offices, document 210 EX/5.III.B, provided by the Administration, indicates that it is "necessary that any transformation be accompanied by a viable human and financial resources plan". ISAU can only agree wholeheartedly that there is a need for such viability in human resources planning. The best reform of the field network will be one which takes into account the needs and expectations of staff, something absolutely essential to its effectiveness. In that connection, we wish to point out that any redeployment should be carried out in consultation with the staff associations if it is in any way expected to succeed.

Recruitment

11. While it is positive that a new recruitment tool, SuccessFactor, has made it possible to shorten the recruitment process timewise, many problems nonetheless remain. The pursuit of efficiency must not take precedence over the concern for effectiveness, which must govern the recruitment of competent staff.

12. The increased flexibility made possible by the new measures, such as the delegation of recruitment authority to the sectors, must be transparent; such transparency can be ensured only if ADM/HRM properly fulfils its oversight role in the recruitment process. ISAU has regularly denounced the lack of involvement on the part of the Bureau of Human Resources Management because

ADM/HRM too often limits itself to simply endorsing the choices made by the sectors. For proof of this, Member States need only realize that this reform was introduced at the same time that there was an increase in the number of Group I nationals who were recruited or promoted last year.

13. In the interests of transparency, we reiterate our request to have the recruitment process for project appointment (PA) posts subject to geographical distribution criteria and to Appointment Review Board (ARB) procedures so that the matter no longer eludes the control of ADM/HRM. These contracts concern civil service posts and it is inadmissible that the extrabudgetary source of their funding should exempt them from the measures which apply to all staff.

14. Finally, we repeat that it is crucial that PA contracts and long-term temporary contracts be regularized as soon as possible.

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19)

15. ISAU acknowledges that the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic puts each of us in an unprecedented situation in which every decision is made that much more difficult because, for the most part, we lack clear reference points. It goes without saying that ISAU supports the Director-General's efforts to protect everyone's health while maintaining our organization's effectiveness at a maximum. ISAU also knows that it can count on the professionalism of the staff, which was again highlighted in the latest IOS report, submitted at this session. Staff members are thus ready to face the challenges ahead.

16. In that connection, the lockdown measures imposed by Headquarters' host country have proven challenging; however, we now know what they entail, and staff members will spare no effort in the event of further confinement. Above all, we hope that these periods of confinement will have led to serious reflection on telecommuting and the opportunities it offers, where there is genuine dialogue with supervisors, for maintaining or improving staff efficiency while providing greater flexibility.

17. We must admit that we did not understand the sudden return to on-site, in-person work last July, although it was carried out under adapted circumstances. The decision to return was all the more surprising since another Paris-based intergovernmental organization, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), adhered to very strict telework rules throughout the same period. We renew our support for the Director-General's efforts to manage the COVID-19 crisis; nonetheless, we also wish to express our concern about this matter.

Well-being

18. We call for the development of a framework for staff well-being which is realistic and effective and which is not limited to a flexible work scheme or occupational health. Now that telework culture has been firmly established, we finally have the opportunity to optimize office facilities and thus create, at the Fontenoy site, a space dedicated to the well-being of all staff members.

19. To conclude, we wish to point out that most of the observations and recommendations contained in this document are not new. The President of ISAU had the opportunity to raise many of the aforementioned issues in his speech before the FA Commission. ISAU is concerned and wonders about the Administration's willingness to listen and to take into account the opinions of UNESCO's staff associations.