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

PART IV

HUMAN RESOURCES ISSUES

ADDENDUM 2

COMMENTS BY THE INTERNATIONAL STAFF ASSOCIATION OF UNESCO (ISAU)

SUMMARY

B. Human Resources Management Strategy

Section 1 – Report on the Implementation of the Human Resources Strategy 2011-2016

Section 2 – Proposals for a Human Resources Management Strategy for 2017-2022

Pursuant to Item 9.2.E.7 of the UNESCO Human Resources Manual, the International Staff Association of UNESCO (ISAU) submits its comments on human resources issues (document 202 EX/5 Part IV (B)).

1. The report on human resources issues is of crucial importance. The question remains: **has there been an evaluation of the previous strategy involving the staff?**

2. As well as the best practices of certain United Nations agencies, the development of a new strategy must draw on the lessons learnt from the previous one. Once again, a new strategy cannot be developed without an objective evaluation of the previous one, and especially not without consulting the staff.



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Section 1 – Report on the Implementation of the Human Resources Strategy 2011-2016

3. The most worrying questions concern the lack of genuine career development plans for the staff and the **limited role of the Bureau of Human Resources Management (HRM) in the recruitment process**, which is entirely in the hands of the different sectors and field offices, which cannot fail but give rise to the practice of double standards when it comes to favouring candidates, who have often been identified as such upstream of the recruitment process. HRM must not confine itself to the role it plays all too often of rubberstamping supervisors' choices. HRM must be involved throughout the recruitment process in the interest of greater transparency and equity.

4. **The staff is the Organization's most important asset.** The quality of human resources management in general, and of the recruitment process in particular, have a direct impact on an organization's performance and effectiveness. The present report does not make this sufficiently clear. **It is hard to find a correlation between performance and career advancement, as the External Auditor has emphasized.** Statistics on this specific aspect would lend credibility to the different information provided in the report. Staff recruitment is a pivotal activity for the Organization. The recruitment process is a significant investment in terms of time and resources but recruitment mistakes have a still higher cost, as they result in lower productivity, the waste of the time involved in resolving performance problems, and even the need to commit additional funds to recruit someone else.

5. **Geographical distribution and gender parity.** The target set by the General Conference of 85% of Member States represented has not been reached. Thirty-four Member States are still not represented in the Secretariat although Group I is still overrepresented. While the efforts made to achieve gender parity are to be welcomed, progress must be made for the P-5 category, in which only 33% of staff are women.

Section 2 – Proposals for a Human Resources Management Strategy for 2017-2022

The International Staff Association of UNESCO (ISAU) questions the financial cost of such a strategy

6. Several aspects relating to recruitment are missing from this report, in particular staffing planning. It is essential to give more importance to internal recruitment and the lateral movement of internal assignments. We deplore the resurgence in the recruitment of external candidates when in the absence of a genuine career policy, staff members wishing to increase their responsibilities have no other option but to enter into competition with these external candidates. Furthermore, this external recruitment has a significant financial cost in this time of crisis, without taking into account the necessary period required for any new recruit.

7. ISAU deplores a total lack of transparency in the recruitment process and calls for an external audit of recruitment procedures that still favour candidates from one geo-cultural group. The involvement of the Ethics Office in the recruitment process should also be envisaged.

8. In the Member States' decision on human resources issues, ISAU calls for the Secretariat to be required to:

- ensure procedures and fair competition are respected in all recruitment, in particular at the highest levels;
- set recruitment objectives and indicators. Ensure that they are respected, and that those responsible for recruitment are held accountable for their achievement;
- conduct a regular review of delegation of authority in respect of results obtained;
- introduce mechanisms to sanction non-observance of established policies and procedures, in particular by means of evaluation and grading and/or by disciplinary measures;

- publish internally all vacant posts requiring temporary assignments to perform duties per interim and to put an end to the current opacity. Officer-in-charge positions provide increased experience and capacity building;
- advertise in advance G-6 and even G-5 posts so as to promote career advancement;
- introduce a system of internal examination for the passage from the General Service category to the international posts in the Professional category and above, as is the practice in other organizations, and an intensive training policy.

9. ISAU welcomes the Administration's initiative to distribute the **standards of conduct** along with a circular letter containing the disciplinary measures taken by the Director-General in 2014-2015. In practice, it is difficult to implement the rules and regulations in the Organization. The application of well-defined procedures is not always effective. This labyrinthine system should then be reviewed. We therefore remind the services concerned that it is absolutely essential to apply the texts more rigorously so as to achieve better justice within the Organization. It is indispensable to speed up procedures as at present it takes a number of years to complete a simple administrative procedure, which is detrimental to the smooth functioning of the Organization.

10. **“Learning, an imperative in a knowledge-based Organization”**. However, the lack of a training budget is a handicap for the staff. Training courses are essential and should be compulsory given the constant evolution of needs. UNESCO claims to be a competitive organization aiming to attract the best talent. Continuing training, in-house, is indispensable in order to maintain competitiveness and excellence in UNESCO. The lack of continuing training will indisputably lead to the recruitment of external candidates to the detriment of serving staff members.

11. We note the small number (32) of candidates for telework. This figure proves that teleworking is not applicable to most posts and we call for the introduction of **flexible working hours** accessible to all.

12. **Strengthen staff capabilities for the Sustainable Development Goals and the current staff profile**. The objectives announced by the human resources services are full of good intentions, but we find it hard to deem their achievement possible, in the light of UNESCO's current financial condition. In the meantime, we recall that the Organization works to a great extent thanks to interns and non-staff members. Staff members account for only 51% of employees. Between 2011 and 2017, the number of staff members at Headquarters fell 23%, which is highly alarming.

13. ISAU welcomes the proposal to establish contracts for a duration that might reach five years after an initial two-year contract. **ISAU takes this opportunity to call for the regularization to the extent possible of temporary staff and long-term project posts.**

14. ISAU is concerned by the extremely serious situation of financial crisis and consequently urges Member States that have not paid their contribution to meet their responsibilities.