



26 January 2021

Chairpersons,
Representative of the Director-General,
Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

It is an honour to speak to you, but it is also my duty to remind you that staff are a key element in any transformation. At a time when the entire world is experiencing a pandemic, with unprecedented human as well as economic costs, UNESCO faces the challenge of continuously adapting to a changing world. If there is one thing that COVID-19 has emphasized, it is the need for international cooperation in all areas. I am thinking in particular of the areas that concern our Organization, education and culture, which have been severely affected, and communication and information, which are essential for supporting policies and publicizing the progress of scientific knowledge, both in the natural sciences and the social and human sciences.

All too often, however, we have witnessed the resurgence of selfishness, which has aggravated the prevalence of the disease and demonstrated how topical and vital the mission entrusted to UNESCO remains: that is, to work for the "intellectual and moral solidarity of humankind". Every staff member knows that he or she is the custodian of this mandate enshrined in our Constitution. We shall therefore be bold and forthright in our approach to the question of UNESCO's strategic transformation; it was launched before the COVID-19 crisis, and we now understand that it requires much more than an accumulation of local restructuring and minor reforms.

UNESCO's strategic transformation is an ongoing concern of ISAU. We are constantly aware of the fact that staff cannot develop positively in an organization that is out of step with current imperatives. Furthermore, an organization cannot transform itself if its administration acts as if staff were simply an adjustment variable.

Once again, we would like to commend our staff who have shown adaptability, flexibility and resilience over the past few months, despite the challenges imposed by the health crisis. We believe that our Organization has a duty more than ever to value its most precious asset: the men and women who work for it. That is why, particularly in these difficult times, we hope that the needs and aspirations expressed by the staff will be heard.

The Bureau of Human Resources Management (HRM) must play a lead role in motivating staff. A real career advancement policy needs to be implemented. Currently, there is no correlation between performance and advancement; this shortcoming is such that it demotivates staff and thus ruins the very idea of a performance culture. It is high time for HRM to fully assume its role in recruitment in order to ensure its efficiency, fairness and transparency. ISAU continues to deplore HRM's lack of involvement. All too often, it stops at endorsing the sectors' choices.

Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

In conclusion, I should like to remind you of my detailed statement to the FA Commission last December, and I should therefore like to express my concern at the Administration's propensity to ignore the opinions of its staff and insidiously erode their fundamental rights through the recent revisions of the Human Resources Manual. Following the abolition of Staff Rule 102.2 of the Manual allowing staff members to make individual reclassification requests, the Administration has abolished in particular the Review Panel and the Reports Board, despite our strong protests.

We recall that in its last report, the Internal Oversight Service (IOS) stressed the need to recognize the value of staff members and their professionalism. However, the recent measures taken by the Administration not only constitute a denial of the staff and its value, but also a contempt for the staff associations and their representatives, elected to bring their voices and grievances to Management. We also defend freedom of information and once again request our Member States to ask the Administration to restore our access to the delegations' mailing list, which was withdrawn in January 2020. ISAU hopes that its written comments and oral statements will resonate in order to prevent a culture of deafness and mistrust from developing within the Secretariat. Such a situation would be unreasonable and irrational, as it could undermine both the integrity and the effectiveness of our Organization.

Thank you for your attention.