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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**

**HUMAN RESOURCES ISSUES**

**ADDENDUM 2**

**COMMENTS FROM THE INTERNATIONAL STAFF ASSOCIATION  
OF UNESCO (ISAU)**

**SUMMARY**

**B. Implementation of the Human Resources  
Management Strategy 2017-2022**

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 211 EX/5.III.B).

1. These comments, drawn up in a constructive spirit of open dialogue, contain ISAU's observations and recommendations on the implementation of the UNESCO Human Resources Management Strategy for 2017-2021.

Strengthening staff capabilities for the SDGs

2. The document begins by referring to the strengthening of staff capabilities for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), but it unfortunately makes no mention of the career development issues that such strengthening should entail. Moreover, the SDGs are not mentioned anywhere else in the document.



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3. These two shortcomings give the impression of a certain arbitrariness in the way human resources management is approached: arbitrariness in the link between the results achieved by individual staff members and their promotion, and arbitrariness also in the link between the tools presented and the concrete objectives of the staff's work, for which the SDGs are indeed a key frame of reference.

4. To display such arbitrariness does not instil motivation in the staff, especially in the current period when the constraints imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic make the fulfilment of tasks more difficult for our colleagues, who have not been lacking in their duties, quite the contrary.

#### Workforce planning and skills inventory

5. Regular workforce planning and skills inventory are necessary exercises to ensure that UNESCO is effectively equipped to fulfil its missions. It is important, however, that these exercises be conducted in an open and consultative manner in order to achieve tangible and conclusive results.

6. It should be noted that, in the current context of budgetary constraints, these exercises have no real practical significance. It might also be expected that such exercises should address career planning, for example, by providing staff with a clear vision of the skills required to progress in terms of responsibility.

7. Again, it is unfortunate that the reference to learning and development is never linked to career advancement opportunities for staff members.

8. ISAU agrees with the principles of planning and inventory. We fear, however, that such principles applied without connection to staff motivation will be limited to bureaucratic exercises with no practical impact on the functioning of the Organization.

#### Recruitment

9. While the efforts of ADM/HRM in the area of outreach to candidates deserve to be recognized, it must be stressed that they are only made upstream of recruitment. This approach raises at least two problems.

10. First, the strategy applied suggests that underrepresentation and non-representation is due to a lack of candidates. If that is the case, ADM/HRM should provide Member States with statistics on the geographical origin of applicants, which would make it possible to measure the effectiveness of its efforts; outreach activities cannot be measured, even over time as the document states, without objective and clear measurement tools.

11. Second, these efforts cannot really be effective if ADM/HRM is not involved in the entire recruitment process, particularly in recruitment panels, where the actual decisions are taken. ISAU is regularly contacted by staff members who express doubts as to the transparency of recruitment, as ADM/HRM seems above all to echo the views of and endorse the choices made by the sectors.

12. ADM/HRM's lack of real involvement in recruitment is obvious in the case of Project Appointment (PA) and temporary staff, whose recruitment is almost entirely at the discretion of the sectors, which ISAU has consistently denounced. These posts should be subject to the Appointment Review Board (ARB) as well as to the geographical distribution criterion.

13. Moreover, it is known that the incumbents of PA and temporary posts often constitute an adjustment variable, a situation which leads to the perpetuation of many of them in an illegitimate precarious situation. This precarious status is a source of insecurity for our colleagues and at the same time costly for the Organization, since it cannot build on the recognized experience and expertise accumulated over many years of commitment.

14. It is up to ADM/HRM to defend the Organization's interests, not by targeting these long-term personnel in a precarious position, but by assessing their practical contribution and, where appropriate, by regularizing the status of those who are carrying out regular tasks. From this point of view, the issue of PA and temporary posts is in fact another symptom of ADM/HRM's lack of involvement in the recruitment process, whose lack of transparency suggests that the posts belong to the sectors recruiting and not to the Organization per se.

#### Mobility

15. ISAU agrees with the Administration that COVID-19 has limited the possibilities for implementing the mobility policy. It is nonetheless questionable whether it is appropriate to limit the current exercise to directors, heads of field offices and staff members in hardship duty stations, who are affected by health constraints in the same way as others. The exclusion of staff at Headquarters in this exercise also seems to imply that the colleagues concerned could not, in principle, be rotated to Headquarters.

16. We note that all Internal Oversight Service (IOS) recommendations, which ISAU supports, will be implemented when launching the mobility exercise. We reiterate that geographical mobility must be carried out in conjunction with functional mobility and the field office reform, and that the staff associations must be closely involved in the mobility exercises.

#### Learning and development

17. ISAU welcomes the efforts made by ADM/HRM to help staff members to adapt to the sometimes-difficult circumstances that COVID-19 has brought about. It is encouraging that a special effort has been made to welcome newcomers and we hope that their integration, which is a guarantee of their effectiveness, can take place in the best possible conditions. It is appropriate that ADM/HRM seek to measure this integration.

18. We would also like to highlight the commitment of staff members to professional development during this period in order to be in a better position to carry out their tasks. On this point, we continue to deplore the lack of a link between the training offered by ADM/HRM and career development.

#### Human resources partnerships

19. The hosting of seconded staff represents a contribution of skills and talents that can be very positive for the Organization. This practice should not, however, lead to the neglect of existing skills and talents in the Organization that could be usefully mobilized, which points to the need for workforce planning and skills inventory exercises that reflect the realities, as mentioned above.

20. Lastly, while secondments do represent a gain, the cost in terms of training time must also be taken into account, given that the seconded staff's commitment is of limited duration.

#### UNESCO internship programme

21. ISAU strongly supports the principle of remuneration for internships. The lack of remuneration leads to a bias in the recruitment of interns in favour of economically advantaged students, especially at Headquarters, located in a city with a high cost of living, which cannot fail to curb the ambitions of many bright and competent students.

22. We also agree that remuneration for internships would help to build a pool of talented and diverse young professionals, including from non-represented and underrepresented countries, for service at UNESCO.

## **Create an enabling and engaging work environment**

### Performance management

23. ISAU also agrees with the statement in the document that “the creation of an enabling and engaging work environment provides the Organization with opportunities to maximize contribution of staff, individually and through teams, with high motivation and engagement”.

24. Nevertheless, ISAU considers that depriving staff of their rights, as the Administration has done by abolishing the Reports Board and the Review Panel, is certainly not the best way to create such an environment. On the contrary, this measure is likely to demotivate staff and create a climate of tension.

25. Furthermore, if performance management is to be used, as the Administration claims, as a “means to constructive, productive dialogue rather than a sterile, administrative tool”, we are convinced that it is merely an administrative and bureaucratic tool when no link is established between the evaluation of staff performance and their career development.

26. We reiterate our proposal for a 360-degree assessment that should include an evaluation of the ability of supervisors to value their staff. This would build trust and foster a dynamic and supportive work environment.

### Staff well-being framework

27. We take note of the work that ADM/HRM is currently doing to develop a framework for staff well-being. However, this work has not yet led to any consultations with the staff associations. ISAU also hopes that careful thought has been given to office space management in order to provide an optimum setting for the staff on their return to the premises.

28. The gains in flexible work arrangements must also be considered from the point of view of the Organization. While staff are just as effective, if not more so, when they have greater autonomy and flexibility in the day-to-day organization of their work, it is important to reflect carefully on the cost of their supervision and presence on the premises. It could be noted, for example, that the current period has demonstrated the effectiveness of electronic signatures. However, this effectiveness is undermined if some supervisors continue to require signatures on paper documents, a practice that forces entire teams to be present on the premises in an unnecessary, counterproductive and costly manner for the Organization. Such an example shows how the issue of flexibility goes beyond the mere well-being of the staff.

### Geographical distribution

29. Our comments on geographical distribution have been submitted separately under document 211 EX/5.III.C Add.2.

30. The Executive Board will have noted that our comments partly repeat those submitted to it by ISAU at previous sessions. The culture of deafness that we previously denounced does not seem to have changed. Indeed, the comments of the staff associations to the Administration are barely paid attention, with the exception, very recently, of ISAU’s criticism of the management of COVID-19 at UNESCO.