



14 April 2021

Mr Chairperson,
Distinguished representative of the Director-General,
Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

The voices of UNESCO staff are only heard through their associations; they must not only be heard, but also listened to!

As President of ISAU, today I find myself obliged to repeat at length observations and recommendations that have gone unheeded by the Administration. We regret that the only issue we raised that was paid any attention was the management of coronavirus disease (COVID-19); yet we have many other opportunities for cooperation with the Administration, which we hope will be effective and harmonious.

We thus continue to call for the Bureau of Human Resources Management (HRM) to take a leading role in motivating staff. This should naturally entail the implementation of a real career advancement policy. The lack of correlation between performance and promotion can only demotivate staff. Without such a correlation, all talk of the ideal of a performance culture is futile and incongruous bureaucratic reverie. Similarly, ISAU deplors the lack of linkage between learning and development activities, on the one hand, and career opportunities, on the other. Once again, inviting staff to improve without offering them prospects defies common sense.

The genuine involvement of HRM in the recruitment process could also ensure transparency and fairness. Many colleagues find recruitment opaque – and how could it be otherwise when the relevant service is almost absent from the process? HRM's lack of involvement is even more obvious in the case of temporary posts, especially Project Appointments (PA), which nevertheless have a status equivalent to staff. Recruitment of this personnel, however, is left entirely to the discretion of the sectors. We constantly insist on the need for PA posts to be subject to Appointment Review Board (ARB) procedures, and to geographical distribution. We regret, in this respect, that the Administration has not proposed any option including PA posts in the calculation of geographical distribution, although this was requested by the Member States. Furthermore, it is time to put an end to the situation of long-term temporary staff and to regularize them. On all these issues, ADM/HRM cannot simply echo and endorse the choices made by the sectors, which too often behave as if the Organization's posts belonged to them rather than to the Organization itself.

ISAU welcomes the plan to remunerate internships, which would make it possible to open them up to a larger number of foreign students, particularly at Headquarters. In addition, remuneration for internships would ultimately help to create a pool of young professionals from unrepresented and underrepresented countries.

With regard to ethics, ISAU reaffirms its attachment to UNESCO's fundamental values of integrity, professionalism and respect for diversity. In particular, we are convinced of the importance of preventing and combating harassment in order to ensure a healthy working environment. We welcome the steps taken by the Ethics Office to promote a culture of accountability and transparency. We also welcome the finalization of UNESCO's first Policy on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA), as well as the development of a culture of ethics based on visible commitment by the Organization's leadership.

Lastly, since ISAU assumes the Vice-Presidency of the United Nations International Civil Servants' Federation (UNISERV), we should like to inform you that ISAU will continue to participate closely in the work of the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) in order to safeguard the acquired rights and improve the conditions of service of UNESCO staff members.

In conclusion, we reiterate our concern about the violations of staff rights. In recent months, the Administration has abolished individual requests for post classification review, as well as the Reports Board and Review Panel. The new 'Review Board' set up does not provide for individual staff members to be heard, which is an example of a violation of their right to defend themselves. All of these measures infringe on the rights of staff. They create a climate of mistrust that demotivates colleagues and generates tension. To be frank, we see a palpable trend of an erosion of basic staff rights, for which the current pandemic is being used as a shield. The staff associations were created to bring the voices of our colleagues to senior management and to the Member States. They must be heard and listened to to ensure the integrity and effectiveness of our Organization.

Thank you for your attention.